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"THE WITCH MAN"

MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON

Frank G. Klein

"THE WITCH MAN"

This One

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"THE WITCH MAN"

BY

MARGARET BELLE HOUSTON

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TO

KATRINA

"THE WITCH MAN"

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I

Innessburg, tucked at the feet of the Blue Ridge, lay fast asleep that February day. She was old and a nap in the sunshine was to be allowed her. It had been a hard winter; the cracks and gullies in her gray rock roads showed that; but now a mild sun shone, the thawing snow lay in shreds on the bright blue grass, and the black beeches had the look of gracious widows who will doff their weeds and smile at you inside a week.

It was Innessburg's old, old houses that were fast asleep. Columned houses, many of them, back of elm-guarded gateways; smaller houses whose front porches the belated street had chopped off and run over, and whose demure doorways opened straight upon the world; grandmotherly houses whose front windows looked like spectacles; warm red brick houses with drowsily sagging blinds; and everywhere, all over Innessburg, little gray-eaved houses huddled in behind the big ones. The smoke drifting from all their chimneys seemed to mark their breathing as they dozed.

There are four trains a day in Innessburg, not counting the freights. One of them was arriving now and disgorging among other passengers a young man. He was tall, somewhat heavy looking in his big overcoat, and showing as he swung down the long station platform the gait and carriage of a one-time soldier. His face was pleasing even at first

glance, despite its ruggedness and the rather grim look it wore, as if his purpose in Innessburg was to be accomplished, cost what it might. The brown eyes looked as if they might have twinkled before this purpose was conceived, and the red hair showing beneath his cap gave signal despite him that a high heart beats on while purposes come and go.

Still carrying his bag—a large well-buckled affair of weathered pig-skin—he went into the little restaurant near the station. There he bought some sandwiches, his hand still resting on the bag, and asked a question of the girl who served him.

"Why yes," she answered, "there's the flour mill over yonder way, and—Eugene, what other plants have we got?"

Eugene meditatively rang up the stranger's twenty-five cents.

"There's the saw-mill," he said.

"And the coffin factory," beamed the girl.

"It's the saw-mill I want," said the stranger. "Can you direct me?"

"You go that way." The girl waved a hand toward the great Appalachian Range. "But there's nobody there today," she added. "It's a holiday."

The stranger looked puzzled.

"Washington's birthday," she explained, staring at him, and the stranger added thoughtfully,

"So it is."

"There's nobody workin' but us and the sun," stated Eugene sitting down in a chair that seemed to be wearing away in his service. The girl turned to him.

"Maybe he wants to see Phil Hoxie," she said without

lowering her voice, as if the stranger's abstracted stare out into the sunshine had removed him beyond range. "He's likely with his men over where they're clearing in Colfax Valley. They say he works on holidays if it's clear."

She raised her voice and repeated this to the stranger, explaining that he could reach the valley by taking Lafayette Pike and keeping to it till he got to the cross-roads; there he would find a new road cut right through the mountains. Colfax Valley was just beyond Little Glory. He couldn't miss it because Little Glory was the closest of all the mountains about Innessburg.

The stranger thanked her and smiled—whether at her scrupulous directions or at something in his own thought she could not know. The girl returned the smile and observed as the stranger went out what nice shoes he wore, not at all the sort of shoes for tramping through the snow.

The stranger kept faithfully to Lafayette Pike, passing the stateliest of the sleeping houses. He walked for three miles, turned at the cross-roads, and came duly to Little Glory, a part of whose gentle slope had been cut away by the new road, leaving a reddish, jowl-like cliff bearded with roots and a black tangle of vines through which showed long teeth of ice and bony protrusions of rock. Farther along, the slope had been rudely recreated with the spade, and steps, some of them projecting bits of rock, others of wood, led up Little Glory's side to where the oaks and pines began. But beyond in the valley which one could see quite clearly, there was no sign of men at work, only the giant hickory and chestnut trees, their boughs interlaced against the blue afternoon.

The stranger walked on to the steps that led up Little Glory. At their foot he paused, staring at the two battered mail boxes one of which had fallen in the snow. He shifted his bag and looked behind him. There was no one in sight, no sound of any one approaching. He went quickly up the steps, coming at length upon a level place where a path showed amid a thicket, and beyond the thicket the roof of a cabin, mossy and black, its stone chimney set in a little circle of snow.

Again the glance behind him, then he broke from the path and went toward the cabin. It was as weathered and brown as a fungus. Boards had been nailed over its doors and windows; the old shoe-string was rotting in its latch. The stranger walked slowly around the place, looked at the empty chicken-coop, the old ash-hopper fallen on its side, the rain-barrel with its solid lump of ice, the bee-hives, huddled together, empty and frozen. Boards had been nailed across the back door too, and a drift of old snow was melting on the step. Amid the sleeping houses of Innessburg, here was one that was quite dead.

He picked up an iron poker lying beside the hopper and thrust it beneath the boards. Their rusted nails yielded and he went inside taking his bag, closing the door behind him. Almost at once he reopened it, letting in the air and light, looking about him, his ears still keenly alert for any passing footstep.

The room was occupied chiefly by a great wooden bed and a stone fire-place. The bed had been stripped to its feather tick and at its foot was a pile of bright patch-work quilts. The fire-place was filled with ashes and a half-charred back-

log rested on two narrow stones that served as andirons. An old wash-stand in the corner supported a lamp and beside it was a white pine table, plainly the work of some home carpenter. Straight hickory chairs and a splint rocker were set at irregular angles about the room and the split-log floor was scattered with rugs of braided rags. Everything reeked of mold and damp.

The stranger thrust his bag under the bed and laying his overcoat which he had taken off early in his walk, upon the pile of quilts, opened a door at the left of the fire-place. Here was a little kitchen given over to a stove and skillet, to rats and mice, fleeing at his approach across the odorous remainders of meal and potatoes. Behind the stove were piles of pine cones and fire-wood—small split pieces for the stove, gnarled black logs for the fire-place.

The man returned with an arm-full of the wood, brought in the hopper, found a shovel amid the potatoes, and taking up the ashes, built a fire that set the cabin's heart beating again. At the right of the chimney was another door opening upon a room no larger than the kitchen and containing a cot, stripped as was the bed. Here he found a tired looking broom and, taking up the rugs, he swept the two bed rooms, driving their dust into the maw of the big fire-place. On the floor by the hearth was a mark, a streak of what looked like brown stain that would not yield to his broom. He abandoned it presently and flinging off his hat with the air of one who has only begun to work, he went into the kitchen.

Before evening the starved old chimney had devoured such a meal as it had never known; the little kitchen was bare of everything except its stove and skillet, and the mice

were holding astonished conference in the stubble outside.

Whole from the cataclysm had emerged a wooden pail, a carton of coffee, some time-stained crockery and wooden handled knives and forks, a kettle that did not leak and a tallow candle—which last, seeing that the lamp was empty of oil, was affixed to a saucer and elevated to the mantel-piece. Then the man went again to the spring that bubbled between the cabin and the path, returning to put coffee and water into the little kettle and set it on the coals; after which he sat down in the splint rocker and watched the kettle until it boiled, whereupon he took it immediately from the fire, letting it steep a bit like tea, then he poured it, black and fragrant, into a cup of flowered porcelain he had found by the spring, brought the sandwiches from his overcoat pocket and ate his supper, stretching out his legs now and then to the fire.

They were good straight legs clad in gray trousers of an excellent cut; but the critical eye might have observed that unless the "cuffs" of the trousers were turned down they were a bit too short, also that the two upper buttons of the waistcoat remained unfastened. But the shoes fit perfectly, smart low shoes of black patent leather—not at all the sort of shoes for tramping through the snow.

The evening came down but the man did not light his candle. Instead, he flung on some pine cones and another log, for the back door was still open and the late air was cool. And while it grew darker and colder outside, the little cabin grew brighter and warmer within, and every cranny became a winking eye fixed on the stranger as he sat by the fire—

smoking now, a ripe old briar-wood pipe whose mesmeric fumes mingled with the fragrance of the pine cones and presently veiled the winking crannies in gray-blue fog.

Suddenly he rose, laid his pipe on the shelf beside the candle and closing the outer door, drew the bolt across it. Then he pulled the pigskin bag from under the bed and taking it over to the fire, sat down again. After listening a moment, he opened it and began to lay its contents on one of the chairs.

There was first a dinner coat of black broadcloth, finely tailored, then a black waistcoat of corded silk. They had been half rolled, half crammed into the satchel. Beneath them was a linen shirt, plaited and white. Its gold studs glistened in the fire light and there fell from its crumpled folds a pair of gray suede gloves and a black tie. The trousers, by virtue of their structure, had submitted to furling with a better grace, and he laid them out to come upon a less confused stratum consisting of freshly laundered shirts of silk and linen, pajamas, underthings, handkerchiefs, ties. He did not disturb these last but reaching beneath them drew out a chamois bag about eight inches square, tied about with tape.

Again the look around him, then reaching into a pocket of the bag, he took out a revolver, and sat a moment with it, listening. Presently he laid it on top of the folded trousers and, unfastening the intricate knots of tape, held the chamois bag over his hand.

The fire-light seemed to leap into his palm, to concentrate itself into a pool of black and green. He laid the shining thing upon the rug—a necklace of black opals whose depths shone with strange nocturnal rainbows. Each stone was

encircled with emeralds whose keen flashing seemed now and then to kindle the buried rainbows into flame. The man unfastened the golden clasp. Glittering in the firelight, the necklace seemed to undulate, to move like some dark and bright serpent across the rug. . . .

There was a sound outside the window. The man swept the necklace into his hand. Again the sound—the drop of melting icicles from the eaves. He restored the necklace to the bag, folded and tied it, thrust it again beneath the contents of the satchel. The clothes he had taken out he replaced also, folding them after a fashion, closing and buckling the bag. Then, only partially undressing, he opened the door again, and with pistol and bag on the floor beside him, lay down on the bed, drawing up one of the patchwork quilts.

It was after midnight that he woke as suddenly as if he had been called. The fire had died down. The white February moon, shining through the open door, made an oblong patch of light that slanted like a bright rug across the floor, ending at the hearth. The man lay very still, then he sat slowly upright, his eyes fixed on the margin of this patch of light where, on the floor, close to the hearth, showed the mark that had not yielded to his broom.

He covered his eyes with his hand, then he looked again—It seemed for an instant as if he would get out of bed and cross the room to the light. Instead he dropped back on the pillows and though he lay very still he did not sleep again till nearly dawn.

When morning came he made himself coffee in the little kettle and went down into Colfax Valley where the men were clearing.

II

"There, Beauregard—steady."

The girl riding up the slope beside the steps proceeded carefully, knowing the exact cleft or rock where on slippery days her horse must place his foot. She was a pretty girl with dark hair and a scarlet Tam o' Shanter. Her horse was white with a black star on his forehead, his flanks spattered with red clay from his late gallop down Lafayette Pike.

Having reached the ledge, the girl stopped in the narrow path where so often she had passed mountaineers trudging from the village, their backs bowed beneath their week's provisions, or met some stray sheep moving with soft tinkle down into the valley. Today no living creature was in sight, but halting in the path the girl took off her tam, a soft light shining in her face.

It was as she had hoped. After the long rains the dogwood had blossomed, broken over all the mountain-side into a white foam. The green rhododendron leaves looked the greener, and the blue sky above them looked the bluer for their whiteness. Even the old Felsinger cabin rising beyond them seemed to emerge a moment from its brown dejection to remark, "Yes, I know. I have watched that black thicket all winter. Won't you get down and have a drink?"

Meaning nothing in the way of moonshine. Always at the flaunting of the first dogwood blossom and with the dropping of the last gray leaf, it was the girl's custom to slip from her saddle and push through the thicket to where the Felsinger spring bubbled like quicksilver amid the stones.

She slid down straightway, touching the ground with a little spring, slim and eager in dark blue sweater and divided

skirt of blue corduroy. Patting her mount with a reassuring hand, she left him grazing at the path's edge and made her way through the dogwood.

The spring played unchanged, fringed with dark green cresses and new violets, but the cup she had left beneath a currant bush last November was gone. She knelt down without ado, meaning to dip up the water, boy-fashion, in her palms, or perhaps place her mouth, beast-fashion, to the pool itself—for on the first day of dogwood there is no knowing what innovation may visit a young girl's manners; but just as she prepared to drink, her eyes moved involuntarily toward the cabin and rested on a young man standing in its doorway,

He was tall and he wore very nice looking clothes and very ugly old boots, regular mountain boots, shapeless as stovepipes. His soft black hat was pushed back on his head and he was smoking a pipe, staring out across the mountains. She knelt very still, looking at him, for apparently he had not seen her.

It was true then that the Felsinger cabin had occupants, permanent tenants perhaps. Two weeks ago, coming home through the dusk and rain, she had fancied she saw a light in the cabin. Some tramp, she had guessed, had sought a lodging for the night. She had been glad of that light for the path down Little Glory had been slippery and desolate, but now on this bright morning she resented the presence of strangers in the familiar place. She rose stealthily, feeling the retreating instinct of a nymph whose grotto has been invaded.

But her soft movement among the bushes caught the man's eye. He turned sharply and they looked at each

other across the twenty yards of cleared ground. Only for an instant. Vanishing inside the house, he reappeared with a long-handled gourd dipper, bare headed and without his pipe. As he came toward her she saw that his eyes were brown and friendly, and obviously undiscerning of any nymphean resentment lurking in her own. She saw too that his hair which had looked so dark was really a rich red and in need of cutting.

"Of course," she thought. "I might have known."

And when he reached the spring her own eyes had become friendly, and she greeted him easily as she always did the mountaineers. He filled the gourd dipper and she drank, dashing the bit of water she had left amid the dogwood behind her.

"I didn't know you at first," she said. "When did you come?"

"Something like a month ago," he replied after a pause. "A little more than a month, I guess." Then smiling, "It's been so rainy I rather lost track of time."

"Why must we have such rainy Marches?" asked the girl, noticing how pleasant his eyes were when he smiled. "Like sherry," she thought. They were grave eyes when he did not smile, but they were not set deep like the mountain eyes she knew. It was a rugged face, though, high rugged cheek-bones, rugged jaw, a finely rounded head that in its covering of thick auburn hair looked as if it might have been hammered out of bronze. He was heavier than the average mountaineer but she knew that it had been many years since he had led that rambling, ill-fed life. She noticed too that while his clothes appeared too small, his high boots were obviously too large. They were like the boots old man

Felsinger used to wear and they looked as if they might have been mildewing in the cellar from the old man's time till now.

"It must have been hard to come back to the old place and find them gone," she said, conscious that he had not been unaware of her swift appraisement of him. "Did you know—before you came?"

He shook his head. "I knew—nothing," he answered.

Her eyes softened with feeling.

"You only learned—afterward?"

"I have seen no one," he replied. "The long rains—"

"You don't know? . . . No one has told you?"

He shook his head. She was silent. It was not easy to tell him.

"The boys," she began, "John and Will who were my pupils—they answered the draft and went. But before that —before that your sister died of the plague. I was with her. I was with—your mother, too—and your father. They died —the same night. It was very bad here on the mountain."

She did not look at him for a moment. Presently she said,

"I remember you. I used to come up on the mountain with Miss Miles and I used to see you. She said you had gone to her school when you were younger; you were about eighteen then. I remember you because Miss Miles used to say to your father, 'Jerry is the flower of your flock. You should send him away to school.' And after a while you left. That must have been ten years ago. I thought most likely you never would come back. John and Will told me when they went that it was for good."

"But I am here," the man answered, and she knew that the tidings she had given him had been no shock. He had guessed without being told.

"I often wonder about John and Will," she said. "Did you see service, too—active service?"

"Four years of it," he answered, accepting her implied permission to walk at her side, pushing the dogwood boughs from her path; then assuming himself the office of interrogator, "You teach school?"

"The little mission school—this side of Wunderschoen."

She was about to mount when she saw that he had knelt, extending his hand as a step for her foot. She sprang to the saddle and sat for a moment smiling at him. Her eyes were blue with a little lift to the outer corners where the black lashes were inclined to tangle when she smiled.

"You've lost a lot of the Felsinger," she said. "You even talk like a 'furriner.' But there's something you can't lose, or rather something you haven't lost."

He looked at her, plainly puzzled.

"The badge of the Hessians," she explained, and pulled on the scarlet tam which she had carried in her hand. Then she nodded, still smiling, and cantered away on her white mount.

The man stood at the path's edge looking after her until the crowding balsams hid her from his view. Then he pushed his way back through the dogwood, stood an instant by the spring and presently returned to the house. In the kitchen he found the flowered porcelain cup and returned it to its place beneath the currant bush. Then he took his hat and closing the door behind him, went down the steps of the incline.

The girl rode on keeping to the little path which encircled the mountain between bushes of laurel and rhododendron whose dark leaves fell like heavy fringe. The air was filled

with the scent of trailing arbutus. Now and then some small mouse-like thing scurried across her path; a flicker of red darted from green covert to green covert, and there, brazen as to his romantic intentions, sat a robin, a straw in his mouth, eyeing her from a low-hung branch.

The girl sang as she went, a lilt half waltz, half revery, breaking midway into a fragment from "Butterfly," her gay young contralto floating back of her among the pines. The sound did not disturb the wood things at their work. Apparently they were accustomed to that slim, blue, mounted figure and its song.

The path began to descend into a grove of pussy willows, across a rosy carpet of wild phlox. The girl pulled the red tam on her hair again—she could not remember when she had taken it off—checked her singing, straightened in the saddle. Just ahead of her, perched on the lowest ledge of the mountain, was the mission school, a long low structure built of logs about whose open doorway was already gathered a group of boys and girls, lean and barefoot and apparently about to commit mayhem on the person of one of their number who sat stoically on the step.

They turned at the girl's call and the tallest of the boys came forward waiting as she dismounted, taking saddle and bridle from her horse and carrying them into the house. The girl went over to the step and surveyed the group. Sleek faces under wet hair virtuously confronted hers. Her eyes descended to the still dry stoic upon the step.

"We couldn't make him, Miss Kadis," chorused the group.

"Shad," said the girl, "go to the spring."

The boy lifted his eyes and looked at her; it was the look of a long hunted animal at bay.

"Shad," she repeated relentlessly, "the girls will not cook any lunch for a boy who has not washed his face."

Shad appeared to reflect on this but he knew that his reflection was a mockery and that the customary Monday battle had been finished with the customary words. He rose, allowing his brethren of the shining countenances to file into the school room, betaking himself under the watchful eye of his teacher to the spring beneath the ledge. The rest of the week he would go without urging, but that icy encounter after a dry and comfortable week-end was not to be undertaken lightly and without a protest.

It was mid-afternoon when the girl started home, her brood scattering before her, detaching themselves in groups as paths appeared, tangent to the main one, nibbling their way up or down the mountain. Often, when news of illness or want had been brought to her, she followed one of these groups. Almost every day in the winter months when there was no school she made unsolicited rounds, bearing food and clothing. Today all was well but she had nevertheless an errand that took her slightly out of her way. She parted from the last "scholar," carrying his solemn farewell down the solitary path.

"Good-bye, Miss Kadis. I sho am learnin'."

They were learning indeed, she felt. Not because of her own overflowing cup but the emptiness of theirs. She had so little to give. They in turn lacked all. Any one who had carried the smallest vessel to the world's well might pour into theirs. She sighed a little wistfully, thinking of those who had offered at various times to help her, and had indeed written her a cheque or donated a cast-off coat. Some had even come with her for a little while and worked valiantly,

but one thing or another had called them from her side. Phil would have staid—he and his algebra class. She had discharged Phil after two months of honest service on his part. Even now he would come back if she would let him.

No, she was not thinking of Phil, nor of the Lang girls who had offered to teach French and had come but once. She did not blame the Langs. Dropping French verbs into that abyss had been like feeding bon-bons to sufferers in time of famine. But there was Coral Valentine who had taken the cooking class. Coral had started three days before Phil left and she went when he went. It seemed the climb up the mountain had done something to her spine. Why it was not her pony's spine Kadis had enquired without discovering.

And there were others but since she had started alone the lack of company did not discourage her. Only now and then she sighed a little wistfully, thinking of all the learning—even Coral's—down there in the world, going to waste.

The thicket of white dogwood was just ahead of her but she turned sharply from the path, encountering almost at once a sullen, loutish man carrying a gun and followed by a dog. His sidelong look may have been an answer to her greeting.

"Is your aunt at home, Ben?" she asked.

"She went ter the loggin'," drawled the man, not entirely pausing in his slow walk past her.

"Then she's at home now, I think," the girl observed, sensing the evasion, aware that she was not a welcome visitor with Ben.

Riding on, she reached a clearing, a gradual slope, beyond which rose a log house of two stories, a pretentious structure as the mountain cabins went. There was no porch but the front steps were built of stones and a stone walk led to the open door. A women sat just inside, a black sun-bonnet on her head, a stick in her mouth.

"Come in," she remarked as Kadis appeared on the step.

She pushed forward a chair.

In the kitchen doorway, slightly turned from them, sat a girl of about eighteen. Her head, lifting as Kadis entered, bowed again above her task. It was a lovely head piled with hair the color of ripe chestnuts. Through the skimp dress of brown cotton showed a soft rondure of form. Her hands moved mechanically as she peeled something—potatoes or turnips—letting the peels fall into a pan on her lap. Her lowered brown lashes made soft shadows on her cheeks. It was a face that had always reminded Kadis of the dogwood blossoms.

"Wilda hasn't been to school this term," stated Kadis, taking the chair, addressing herself to the woman.

The woman looked at her, nodded.

"Th' ain't no reason fer her goin'," she drawled presently. "She's done larnt readin' and writin' tell she ain't much 'count 'round the house. Whut use folks got fer them things? I ain't never had 'em—and look at me."

Kadis looked at her, at the thin, rounded shoulders, the seamed face, the mouth that was no more than a line wrinkled about the stick. She could not imagine Wilda like that. She could not because she would not, for she knew well that the dark magic of ignorance and isolation would work

their change long before the years had brought maturity to Wilda.

A soft barefoot tread was heard on the stair that ascended from the kitchen and a boy of six or seven came into the room. His eyes were bright and shy as they rested on Kadis.

"But Mrs. Thorn," protested Kadis, "Wilda was learning other things, too—cooking and sewing—"

"Plumb foolishness," remarked Mrs. Thorn. "I hed done teached Wilda all the cookin' she'd oughter know."

Kadis' out-stretched hand had drawn the boy to her side.

"Surrey, too," she said. "You promised that Surrey should start this term."

Mrs. Thorn snatched off her black sun-bonnet, took from the window-sill a little tin snuff-box, swabbed the stick around it and presently observed, the tremor in her voice betraying her emotion.

"Whut does Wilda and Surrey want ter go ter a place wha a Hoxie is? Whut business is they got a-larnin' frum a Hoxie?"

"If you mean—" began Kadis after a pause.

Mrs. Thorn leaned forward peering at her from narrowed eyes that were the amber-gray of Wilda's.

"I mean that Phil Hoxie whut teached algebry. *You* know what I mean."

Kadis' eyelids fell, veiling what might have been an expression of relief.

"Mr. Hoxie isn't there any more," she said.

"He run, didn't he?" chuckled the woman, plying the snuff-stick with her thin, vigorous mouth. "He better run, better n't he, Wildy?"

Kadis herself repressed a smile at the thought of Phil running.

"I have the algebra class now," she said rising. "And Wilda didn't finish her history nor the basket she was weaving. And we're reading 'Kidnapped,' Wilda."

The girl seemed about to lift her head. Instead she bowed it lower above the pan in her lap.

" 'Tain't no use," finished Mrs. Thorn nodding her approval of this indifference. "They ain't a-comin' wha' tha's been a Hoxie. Hit's like they was a varmint tha'. 'Tain't no use—never."

Kadis rode away disconsolate. She had never been able to convince the older mountain people nor many of the younger ones that she taught for their benefit and not her own. What would become of Wilda now—Wilda who had been the brightest pupil she had; whose thought had been so swift and mounting; whose clear eyes had missed nothing from the fashion in which her teacher did her hair to the minutest light blue lake upon the map. Would she sink deeper and deeper into the slough of thought about her? Would it be only when she in turn was bent and shriveled and, remembering, pushed her own children out and bade them grow, that the planting Kadis tended now would come to harvest? These thoughts were not new and they came always with the same fierce rebellion. It is only age that can resign itself to some remote fruition of its task.

Yet her face brightened as she came in sight of the Felsinger cabin once again. Here was harvest indeed—this Felsinger returned to his people with a message from the world and what a mountain boy could do in it, armed with only the little vision of the mission school. She wished that

Miss Miles, her predecessor, were here to see. But perhaps Miss Miles had lived to witness many such.

A pile of new lumber lay before the cabin door, and now she saw the man himself coming up the incline just ahead of her. His head was bent and he did not see her until she spoke.

"Making improvements?" she called.

He laid down the plank he carried, took off the old cap he wore and mopped his face.

"What is home without a porch?" he asked, smiling at her, as sudden in her appearance as some forest spirit.

She nodded, riding closer.

"A porch is like a friend," she remarked. "It's a chum in fair weather and when the winds blow it keeps the rain and snow from the door."

"Are friends like that?" he asked.

"Of course. How big is it?"

"It's somewhat narrow for a friend. It has to have a roof, you see, and posts—"

"The posts should be of logs like the cabin," she said. She rose in her stirrups and pointed toward the valley.

"You see that wooded section—what used to be Dever's Grove in your day?"

"I worked there when I first came," answered the man.

"Well, my cousin owns it now—Phil Hoxie. Go there and cut you some logs—any but the walnuts. Did you see Mr. Hoxie when you were there?"

"He was away," answered the man.

"In the coal fields. He's away a great deal. He's back now and I'll speak to him about your logs. If he happens

not to be there when you go for them tell the men I sent you —Kadis Leigh. They will help you haul and carry them."

"You are very kind," the man's low voice returned.

"Kind? . . . I want to see this job done right, that's all. I have to pass here every day." She tugged on her red cap. "I think you told me you were four years over-seas," she added. "You must have gone in at the start."

"Yes. I drove an ambulance; then I was in the French Flying Corps till the flag came over."

He looked away as if waiting for her to ride on.

"I think I have guessed something," she said.

His eyes did not return to her.

"You are a writer—or an artist—or an inventor."

"That's rather all-inclusive for a guess," he suggested.

"But they all belong to one class, the class that desires solitude and silence. You're a writer, to narrow my guess. And you drank of the spring here when you were very young, so you had to come back. All you Felsingers will come back—in time."

His brown eyes smiled.

"I believe in fairies—yes," he said. "Won't you cast your spell on my porch so that I can have it right away?"

"My logs and your muscle—isn't that spell enough?"

And she cantered away reflecting that along with the badge of the Hessians he had retained the ingrained reticence of the mountaineer.

The man watched her go, watched her white mount, then her slim blue body, then her red cap, gradually disappear. After which he took up his plank and carried it to the pile beside the step.

Late that evening a boy stopped in the path and stared at the pile of lumber. He was a slender youth of good height, dark, well-dressed, obviously from the village. Presently he glanced up, saw the man in the door.

"If you brought that lumber up the mountain," he remarked, "You're as husky as Sprauss the Hessian."

"The Hessian?" repeated the man. "I find many changes now. Are there Hessians about here?"

"Since George the Third. When did you leave?"

And as the man joined in his smile,

"Wunderschoen is solid Hessian. They are the unmixed descendants of those hireling soldiers who came over in '76. You'll find them clannish, marrying and intermarrying among themselves. They've not much temptation to do anything else—the other mountaineers avoid them pretty much. There aren't many on Little Glory—"

The boy stopped suddenly, flushing in the dusk.

"You're kidding me," he said. "You're Hessian yourself."

"Because of the lumber?"

"No, your—hair. Isn't this the Felsinger cabin?"

"Are all red-headed people Hessian?" smiled the man.

"Not that. But every Hessian in these parts is red-haired. It's like a mark—the color of the clan."

The boy explained this, it seemed, less to enlighten the enquirer than to apprise him that he knew. The remembrance of his errand called to him and he hurried on up the mountain.

The man stood still in the doorway. In the cleft of the hills before him a new moon hung in a green and amber sky. The white dogwood blossoms took on a misty over-glow.

The smell of arbutus came to him, the stir of little homing things. Presently he sat down on the step and lighting the old briar-wood pipe, began to smoke, smiling still as he watched the stars melt into the dim green spaces of the sky.

III

Kadis woke next morning to the sound of a wood thrush hidden in some tangle of her garden. It was still early and she lay for a moment, stretching out her arms in their crumpled laces, staring up at the crimson-lined tester of the old rose-wood bed. Presently she slipped from the covers, slid her feet into padded slippers and going to the window looked down on the box-bordered walks, the sloping terraces, the shrubbery clouded with blossom, the old stone wall. In the distance she could see Little Glory, still veiled in morning mist, and Lafayette Pike, gray and venerable, under the freshly leaved beeches and elms. Beneath her window the white lilac had flowered in the night and yonder a shaking bough of the pink almond tree betrayed the spot where the thrush was singing.

So he was back—her little alarm clock! He was late this year.

Kadis lowered the window and dressing quickly went down the polished, curved old stair. It was her office to see that the breakfast fruit was properly apportioned, that the doylies were evenly laid and that little black Eliza, who always waited at breakfast, wore a cap and apron sufficiently fresh not to distract Judge Hoxie.

Breakfast was still eaten at Roslyn in the long, oak-paneled dining-room in the company of the massive side-

board silver and the portraits of ancestral Leighs and Hoxies. They were rather agreeable company on the whole, particularly the ancestors. There was a "Parliamentary General" among them, also an Earl of Something, painted when he was very young, and a Cavalier with curls. There was a dark-haired Lady Judith with up-quirking corners to her eyes like Kadis'; she wore white and had roses in her hair. And there was a somewhat stern duchess in black who had been born a Leigh and who was rumored to have embodied all the traits that should characterize a female of the line. There was a lieutenant of Washington's army, an ambassador to France, a statesman of the time of Jackson and a lovely blonde person who had been wooed (it was said) by Lafayette.

It was an agreeable gathering, as I say, except that they all had a pronounced habit of staring. Even the young earl looked and looked at you, unperturbed by your confusion or your cold response. He was not so bad but Kadis had once been convinced that the stern duchess was profoundly aware of the exact amount of jam she intended to appropriate on her next visit to the pantry. She did not like to be stared at unless she felt some disarming kinship in the gaze.

"Your forebears, Kadis," her father had once said to her as he led her about the room.

"No, *eight* bears," answered Kadis, counting them carefully and omitting Lady Judith with the roses.

Their undying gaze had been brought home to her later in graver ways than this. The traditions by which these people had lived must be sustained by those who shared

their blood. She could not remember when she had not been told, "A Leigh does not do this," or "That is not the Hoxie way." Even old Mammy Dilsey had been wont to send her and Phil off to parties with the crowning admonition, "An' doan fergit you all is Hoxies."

Every trait and feature in her generation had been duly catalogued as native to some acknowledged branch (Poor Phil! He had so little of either Leigh or Hoxie!) or else looked on askance as proceeding from nowhere; and though in the early years there had been a vague rebellion at this arbitrary classifying—as if one might not legitimately start a little trait or feature of one's own!—Kadis grew to be as undisturbed by it as she was by the eyes of the portraits. The old traditions became a part of her as the portraits were a part of Roslyn.

She set the big silver coffee urn in place, loosened the cluster of white lilacs which always in their season filled the blue bowl in the center of the table, and having passed upon the degree of Eliza's spotlessness, turned at the soft sound of her mother's step.

Mrs. Leigh was a fair, tall woman, dressed in white; she had never put on color since the death of Kadis' father in the sixth year of their marriage. She was not unlike Kadis despite their difference in coloring. There was the same evenness of feature, in her case the more pronounced, for Kadis' chin had a rondure and her mouth a soft red curve—all duly accounted for, you may be sure, but not straight Hoxie as was her mother's perfect profile. It had been a lovely face in youth though never showing the play of light and color that made Kadis never the same two seconds

running. It was a lovely face still, with behind it something very sad and quiet, something that withdrew if one came too close. She seemed in place behind the big coffee urn, her fragile hands moving among the cups.

"I didn't hear you last night when you came in," she said to Kadis. "Did you and Phil have a nice time?"

"Bridge," answered Kadis, hurrying a little as if she were stepping over a charged wire. "Just one of Lou Attie's regular parties. Did Uncle get in?"

"Right after you left. . . . I suppose Phil or Coral won the prize." Mrs. Leigh was always interested in the details of Kadis' parties.

"Coral, a desk-set. Lou Attie didn't want to give it to her; she was rather obvious about it. Lester himself won the men's prize and presented it to a man from Norfolk—somebody's guest. I didn't see it but I heard them exclaiming over it."

"Didn't Phil play?" asked Mrs. Leigh.

Kadis was spared replying by the entrance of her uncle whom she rose to greet, a little ceremony he would expect since he had been away for a fortnight. He drew out his chair when she had sat down again, surveying the white lilacs appreciatively.

"Everything in bloom," he remarked. "Where's Phil?"

He was a fine-looking man, Judge Hoxie, somewhere in the middle fifties and very like the "Parliamentary General" on the wall. The portraits appeared to look at him approvingly and you yourself would have pronounced straightway, "Here is a man to uphold the old traditions. If they

were left solely in his hands the dead generations need have no fear."

Yet this was the man who in a certain moment, twenty-odd years before, had thrown those old traditions to the wind. And the portraits had gone on looking at him just as approvingly, whatever may have been the stir beyond the Styx.

"Where is Phil?" he asked again, aware that Kadis and her mother had done no more than look toward the hall door at his first inquiry. And Phil straightway appeared, entering from the veranda.

"Well, my son," said Judge Hoxie when the two had greeted each other, for though they had both been away it had been in different directions, "Did you enjoy yourself last night?'

There was something not unlike reproach in the inquiry for he had been frankly astonished the night before to find that both Kadis and Phil had absented themselves on this occasion of his return.

Phil looked at his father curiously.

"Enjoy?" he repeated and was about to add that he had been working when he met Kadis' half warning, half smiling eyes.

"I didn't expect you back, sir," he answered then, unfolding his napkin, pushing away his orange.

He was a handsome boy with olive skin and fine dark eyes. There was a slight fullness about his mouth and a cleft in his slender chin. He was neither Leigh nor Hoxie, but the image of his mother who had died when he was born.

Graham Hoxie, his father, then a young man on whose shoulders rested the burden of retrieving the fortunes of his house, had ridden over to Cuthbert, a little mountain town well off the railroad, to plead in court the cause of a certain Silas Dabney. Dabney was a recluse, a dour, silent man, working a little tobacco farm, and described by his neighbors as "crazy-like" because of his habit of buying waste mountain land. Crazy or not, he had uncanny gifts as a trader. Land was his hobby. He collected acres as some men collect incunabula or copper luster.

Just now he was having difficulty with his titles. His favorite piece, a tract of a hundred acres for which he had traded a pony—"A good hoss, mind ye. The feller sold her fer fifteen dollars."—the seller had attempted to re-buy and on Dabney's refusal to sell—Dabney always refused to sell—had brought suit to prove that the claim was illegal.

Young Hoxie won the case for him and incidentally fell in love with his client's daughter, a shy, gentle girl showing in her dark hair and shadowy, thick-lashed eyes the Huguenot strain that is found now and then in the mountains. (Daubigny the name had once been, old Dabney explained in connection with his titles.) Graham had started home, Dabney promising to pay his fee when he sold his "crap"; but at a turn in the road the thought of Tressa on that lonely farm with that inscrutable old man, caused him to turn back. He found her sitting at the road-side where he had left her, her dark eyes gazing in the direction he had gone, without hope and without complaint.

They were married that night and after the ceremony—performed by a "called" preacher of the Old School—Silas

bney remarked, "Now I don't owe ye no fee, bein' as re my son-in-law."

He was a good trader, was old man Dabney.

Graham Hoxie sent his wife away to school and after two rs brought her to his home.

Roslyn was not then as now. The old place had never overed from the war. Tangled gardens outside, worn pets and faded walls within, everything was down at ls but holding up its head. The old traditions were being tained and not despairingly. Who knew what fresh ry this generation might not bring to the house of Hoxie? aham was born to be a success and Adelaide was very ely.

Adelaide—Mrs. Leigh—could remember still her mother worn, rustling brocade, receiving Graham's bride—Gra- n who might have married any girl in Dixie! But the bride s very appealing with her dark eyes like a child's, and her le dress of soft blue silk. And Graham was so terribly in e and so anxious as to how they would receive her. ll, Colonel and Mrs. Hoxie had been very gracious and herself had loved Tressa, though she had long before tled on her chum, Betty Fairfax, as Graham's wife—if aham should every marry.

She could recall their three years of happiness toward the l of which all memory of them was blurred, for her own nance had begun and within another six months she had self compounded poverty, as her father grimly phrased it, marrying her cousin, Carter Leigh. But he was a Leigh, a couldn't get around that. Phil was born before the ar was out, and Kadis three months later.

And it was Graham's marriage after all that restored the family fortunes. Coal was discovered in the mountains about Cuthbert, the railroads came, and Silas Dabney, dying —he had been more than a good trader, had old man Dabney—left everything to Phil. Colonel Hoxie and his wife barely lived to see this sudden turning of the lane. They went down into the shades gently triumphant and a little dazed.

On this spring morning the breakfast conversation was sustained almost exclusively by Judge Hoxie. He recounted the interests of his visit to Washington, led now and then into pleasant deviations by the eager attention of his younger listeners; his sister's interest he could always depend on.

But the eagerness of Phil and Kadis had its foundation in a fear that he might at any minute lapse from the narrative to the interrogative in his address. This did not occur and Kadis went up presently to get into her Little Glory clothes as she called the blue sweater and divided skirt. Phil who was to ride over to Colfax Valley disappeared also to wait for her in the drive.

Judge Hoxie from the library window watched them ride away, Phil on the roan, handsome in his riding clothes, Kadis on old white Beauregard, her slim figure vibrant with life, her dark hair blowing beneath her scarlet tam.

He shook his head as his eyes followed Kadis. Why could her energies not find a natural feminine outlet? Why this riding up Little Glory with the regularity of a man going to his office? Music and embroidery and the pleasures and duties of Roslyn had been sufficient to occupy the Leigh and

Hoxie women hitherto. But Kadis must have college, the exclusive seminary graced by her ancestresses not having been enough. And now it was a career.

"She should have been a boy," he thought, "and Phil—"

The words did not shape themselves but somewhere through his consciousness moved the old thought, "Phil should have been a girl."

Apparently the Creator has much to answer for in not observing with greater deference the proper limitations of the sexes.

At the gates Kadis snatched off her tam shaking back her hair.

"She always did that," mused the judge, smiling in spite of himself. "Now they'll race."

And race they did, coming to a halt far down Lafayette Pike, the roan twenty paces ahead.

Kadis sat patting her mount.

"I'm not going to race any more," she said. "Beauregard's getting too old."

"I told you I'd give you the filly," answered the boy, riding on as she came abreast of him.

"Some day," she assented. "But we'd miss each other now, wouldn't we, Beau? Imagine his seeing me go off some morning on the filly. He wouldn't understand and I'd be too stupid to know how to explain. . . . Besides, I'd have to break in the filly."

"She's being broken at the farm," answered Phil.

"I know. I mean train her—teach her my ways. Beauregard knows every step of Little Glory. When I come down on dark nights I never need worry. He knows."

They rode in silence, then reaching the cross-roads, the boy spoke abruptly.

"Why put it off any longer, Kadis? Why not this spring?"

Kadis did not answer at once. The tone on Phil's part was not new. Had her uncle been urging that he hurry things, and did Phil speak automatically?

"I tell you—I need you, Kadis," said the boy as the silence grew.

Her rich blue glance met his.

"Need me, Phil?"

"Of course. You ought to know. I was talking to dad before I left. He thinks—"

"Yes, I know." She looked away. "He thinks you need me and that I need you. He thinks it's time for me to give up Little Glory School and that you—I know what he thinks, Phil. I thought you spoke for yourself."

"I do speak for myself. I need you. Won't you believe me?"

She smiled, glancing at him again.

"You have me, Phil. I'm always on hand."

"That's not it, Kadis."

"I'm always on hand," she persisted, "and often you're not. Last night, for instance—"

"Oh, now and then, of course."

"But I had told you in the morning—as soon as you came in. We were going to Lou Attie's—"

"By crickety, I forgot that!"

"And if you really needed me—" She was still smiling, watching him from the corners of her eyes. "Lou Attie needed me worse, as it happened. There were five tables

and only nineteen hands, counting her and Lester. Lester came for me. Mother didn't know. I let her think you'd gone with me because I—because I knew you weren't at your office. I had phoned there."

"I'm sorry. You're a good sport, Kadis, to see me through—at the table, I mean."

He seemed about to say more but shifted instead in his saddle and laid his hand on hers, a movement that would have checked the average horse but Beauregard jogged on undisturbed by the antics of those above him.

"This spring, Kadis—please."

The blue eyes looked gravely into his.

"I reckon," she said at last, "we might as well. Things can't go on like this—forever."

IV

At the foot of Little Glory they parted, Phil riding on to the logging camp in Colfax Valley. Kadis went slowly up the steep, thinking of her promise.

So it was close at last, the edge of that sea whose waters had so long been in the foreground of her horizon. It seemed a familiar sea. She feared no strange tropical hurricanes, no floating dangers; to venture upon it required the merest flare of courage. Philip's "I need you" had been as imperative as the parting gong. And yet—did not any ship become a prison when one boarded it for a continual cruise and not some special port?

She could not remember when she had not expected to marry Phil. It was not only that the wills of their elders

had drawn them together after Phil's money came; they had turned instinctively to each other, even in those little years when they had shared their toys and played together in Roslyn's forlorn old gardens; even when Phil developed what his father called "tantrums," dark spells of anger when he was sent upstairs with instructions to remain until he could be decent. When he was very small these periods of exile were distinguished by the beating of his heels upon the floor until one wondered that the child's strength could so endure and all the servants were aware that Master Phil was having "one of his fits." As he grew older these sounds from his prison became less, but the metamorphosis demanded by his father was delayed as before until Kadis, seizing her opportunity, stole up to him.

Graham Hoxie loved his son but it was a love that spent its energies in striving to mold rather than direct. It was a love that, demanding of its object respect, came to garner fear instead, a fear dark and lowering, bordering almost upon hate. To the end of time Phil Hoxie must associate his father with the black empty room upstairs where he beat his heels upon the floor, feeling no sense of shame or peace till Kadis came.

The boy's passion for music and his ability, even from babyhood, to "make tunes" amused the father at first, then he became disturbed as the tendency grew. It was Kadis who should play, not Phil. And Kadis to whom practicing was torment was duly instructed in the piano. Many were the times that she slid from the stool to let Phil take her place there, while her mother, listening in the next room, heard the exercise go on more evenly than before and

reflected that Kadis would be a musician yet. But Kadis was at that minute mounted on Beauregard and flying down Lafayette Pike.

"It's wicked, I reckon—but it's making Phil happy." Thus she salved her conscience.

Judge Hoxie came home unexpectedly one day and caught Phil at this understudying. Then there was a scene. But Kadis herself appeared and facing him with blue eyes blazing under her tumbled hair, demanded that Phil be allowed to take music in her place.

"No wonder he has fits when you keep him all bottled up," blazed Kadis, speaking as no young Hoxie had ever spoken to a senior generation of the name.

But her mother had surprisingly taken her side and Judge Hoxie agreed to reflect upon the matter, finally giving his consent.

Phil chose the violin. Kadis curled among the cushions listened always when the boy played, listened rather than ride out on Beauregard; but Phil's father was never present on these occasions. Judge Hoxie had consented to the lessons as an experiment and Kadis' diagnosis had turned out to be correct. Phil's fits of anger had ceased. The remedy was not worse than the disease. It merely showed how fearful was the affliction that such measures were required to hold it in check. He had no desire to contemplate these measures.

When Phil fell heir to old man Dabney's coal lands he went off to college for two years, then he returned to take up the responsibilities of his inheritance. That had been three years ago and during this time he had rarely touched

his violin. Judge Hoxie felt that he owed Dabney a debt for more than the acres about Cuthbert. Phil would be a man now instead of a "male musician."

Only Kadis sorrowed. Something seemed gone from Phil. And that, she felt, was why he had played cards in that dirty little place back of "Larry's Pool Room." All one winter he played, winning and losing incredible sums—a sort of seizure that appeared to have come in place of the old fits of temper. Judge Hoxie discovered Phil's practices and, while he reminded his niece and sister that the Hoxie blood was sporting blood, he took Phil privately to task, forbidding him to play again on threat of dreadful penalties. Whereupon Phil developed uncanny gifts of subterfuge and went on playing worse than ever.

It was Kadis who stopped him. She hated the concealment, the underhandedness of it, the dirty men who played with him, for Phil denied nothing when she questioned him. She vowed she would not marry him unless he stopped. And so far as she knew, Phil had stopped.

But in this last year Kadis had discovered that she did not care to marry. If she married it would be Phil—whom else? But marriage itself would interrupt so much—Little Glory, for instance, and jolly friendships with men one didn't marry. There had been several of these and while Phil had never cared, her mother had called these friendships "affairs" and early in the game had taken Kadis to contemplate the portrait of Lady Judith with the upquirking corners to her eyes.

"Her fate was not a happy one, Kadis," said Mrs. Leigh. "Toying with hearts is a dangerous pastime. Your grand-

father used to say that no gentleman ever proposed to a lady and was refused."

Kadis knew the answer to this, verily that a lady who is a lady forestalls any proposal she means to decline. But Kadis had rather liked proposals. Armored in her old traditions and her betrothal to Phil, she could listen to any wooer—even though he wore khaki—and dance on, unregretting, very, very sweet and kind in her replies.

It was usually at dances that these things occurred. Next day she was a sane and sober little school marm, taking the path up Little Glory with every bit of her heart in her task. Yes, marriage would interrupt Little Glory, too. That was understood.

"Just until I'm married," she had pleaded when little Miss Miles had fallen ill and died in the middle of a term and Kadis had taken her place. That was three years before when she and Phil were twenty . . . Little Glory, too . . .

But Phil needed her. And things couldn't go on forever—like this.

Kadis had long since passed the Felsinger cabin, emerging from her reflections sufficiently to observe that the porch was underway but the carpenter nowhere about. Presently she came in sight of the school house and called her greeting to the little crowd about the step.

"Not much longer now," she thought as they stood up with wet and shining faces.

Riding home late that afternoon she saw that the Felsinger porch was nearly finished, the hickory log uprights in place and the floor laid. Felsinger himself was there now and turned from his work for her approval.

She gave it without stint and presently slid from the saddle. He sprang inside and brought out one of the hickory chairs, helping her to mount the porch.

"Next time there'll be a step," he explained and as she sat fanning herself with the red tam, he added, "May I bring you a drink from the spring—or would you rather have tea?"

Kadis wished neither and asked curiously,

"Where did you learn to make tea?"

"From the English chaps," he answered, sitting down on the porch-edge, leaning against the log post behind him. "They used to brew it while the Zeppelins were singing over the roof, and they used to ask for it in the midst of old French champagnes. . . . I see you are looking at my view. Isn't it enough to inspire a porch?"

"That little gap in the hills," said Kadis. "It looks as if some one's faith had removed a mountain so that you might watch the moon rise."

"And the sun rise. And while the sunset is hidden from me by the hills on the other side that little gap acts like a mirror and gives most of it back to me."

Kadis leaned back in the hickory chair. She was tired. After school she had gone over to Wunderschoen to bathe and dress the bed-ridden mother of Shad Sprauss. Mrs. Sprauss was a heavy woman, incapable of moving herself in the bed. Incidentally, Kadis had cooked the family supper and compelled the neighbors to come in and clean the little house, afterward delivering a homily to the woman's husband who spent his abundant leisure on a drygoods box in Wunderschoen's general store. The more highly evolved

the male, the greater the degree of tolerance with which he receives the feminine rebuke. The mountain man is primitive. This one ordered Kadis to larn her place and to quit a-pesterin' his woman and his house. He was Sprauss the Hessian, the strong man of Wunderschoen, and the neighbors looking on with agitated interest, expected to see Kadis lifted bodily and deposited on the farther side of Little Glory.

But Kadis, when she had dispersed the neighbors and given the woman her supper, departed as she had come, Shad emerging from the bushes along the road and walking beside her a little way.

"Yes," she answered now, looking at the little gap in the hills, "it is quiet and beautiful here. I should think you would never go back."

"Perhaps I shan't," returned the man. "If one drinks of the spring, you know—"

She turned to him.

"Did you really drink of the spring? I thought afterwards you couldn't be a Hessian."

His eyes lighted.

"Why not? Is it so dreadful a fate to be a Hessian—one of these mountain Hessians? They left Germany in the eighteenth century, remember—the century that is no more a part of this Germany than is Innessburg herself. They were hirelings, it is true—but does anybody say they fought very viciously once they got here? I think myself they were as half-hearted as most hirelings are. And once they were whipped, they settled down without complaint and without even enquiring about the boats home."

"I never thought of it in that way," she answered. "I was about to apologize for thinking you were Jerry Felsinger. And was I right in my other guess?"

He withdrew his eyes to look out across the hills.

"If I remember it correctly—"

"That you came here for solitude."

"I thought you guessed that I was an inventor—or artist—or writer."

"I narrowed it to the last," she reminded him.

He looked at her.

"That is very curious," he said.

"You really are?" she cried, divided between triumph in having guessed aright and joy that a mountain boy should have climbed so high. "Of course you write under another name," she added, and was immediately aware that her assumption had been better left unspoken.

He appeared not to have heard.

"I wanted to ask you something," he said after a silence. "I learned from Ben Cotrell yesterday that your cousin helped you last term in the school and that he had quit. I wanted to ask you if I might have his place."

"Would you teach there?" she asked.

"You mean *could* I. I think I could. I am sure I could take some subjects."

"I could offer you anything from basket-weaving to Euclid. Did Ben tell you why my cousin had quit?"

"It had something to do with the stills, I believe. You know the Hessians are rather set apart by the other mountaineers; they don't have much to say to us. But he did

pay me the compliment of remarking that he had heard we Felsingers were like furriners and never kept stills."

She knew that he was trying to cover what Ben had said about Phil and determined to explain.

"Phil stopped because I made him. I told him what was the truth—that his coming would break up the school. Neither one of us paid any attention to the threatening scrawls he got—Ben Cotrell's scrawls. But the name of Hoxie is hated through the mountains now. If I were a man they would no more allow me on Little Glory than if I had horns and hoofs."

"Cotrell never mentioned your name, of course," said Felsinger. "He remarked only that Judge Hoxie had sent his uncle up and wrecked the family business by breaking up their stills. I didn't offer my sympathies particularly and he made that scathing observation about the Felsingers being like furriners, and inquired how I'd like to have the law walk in and snatch my pot of beans off my stove and bust 'em both to flinders. Apparently he is aware of my daily menu. Said his uncle had sent for him to come and take his place when he was sent up; he has always lived in Dolway, it seems. But he looks for his uncle to get out and come back; then there will be, he says, all sorts of things to pay."

"That's what he used to scrawl to Phil. But Ben himself is a coward. Without Thorn's leadership the men that are left on the mountain are harmless enough. Thorn was the worst man on the mountain—worst, I mean, according to our lights. They think—and I can understand them—that they are merely defending their own from interference,

their pot of beans cooking on their stove. They haven't the land to raise big crops, nor the teams to haul them, nor the roads to haul them over. A little corn makes a lot of whisky—and so they live. It's wrong, but they can't see it. This mountain is a little world in itself. Thorn won't come back," she broke off, "not for some time, at any rate. My uncle gave him the maximum."

"Even for a woman," said Felsinger, "it must have been hard to go on teaching up here after that."

"In a way. But sometimes one is urged on by something bigger than the obstacles one meets."

His face lighted in answer and she went on quickly, unable to keep a growing earnestness out of her voice.

"It's a big work and there are only a few to do it. We spend so much money about here in the prosecution of crime that there is none left for public mountain schools. And when you go farther and appeal to the whole country, why it's too busy educating the foreign-born children who crowd our cities. Right here—here on Little Glory and through all these eastern mountains—is the purest Anglo-Saxon blood we have. Their jealousy of their freedom, their willingness to die for their standards and their rights as they conceive them—what is that but the old spirit that made us what we are? A coward is the rarest thing among them. You know what their war record was. Their patriotism and their courage are as untainted as their blood. Some day America may need them again, ignorant and poor as they are, need them in a way she never dreams."

Again she broke off, flushing a little, remembering that the Hessians could not by any stretch be classed as Anglo-Saxons.

"That's why one works on," she added in a lower voice.

"And the greatest obstacle must be—their desire to remain as they are," he answered, relieving her by keeping to the impersonal note.

"They are not all that way," she said quickly. "Some of them are eager to learn. Take you Felsinger boys, for instance. Take Wilda Thorn. And what is a desire to remain in ignorance—but ignorance itself? In their case it is the old pride—uninstructed."

It was not often she found so responsive a listener.

"I am glad you were one of them," she said, "since you are coming over into Macedonia to help us. But how can a writer find the time to teach?"

He was about to answer her when they both turned to see Phil coming up the incline. Phil glanced at Beauregard standing in the path, then his eyes moved to the porch where they sat and he came over to them.

"We have met," he said when Kadis introduced Felsinger. "I see you have put your logs to speedy use," he added, surveying the half-finished porch. He did not allude to that first encounter when, passing the cabin at about this hour in the evening, Felsinger had kidded him about the Hessians.

"Anything wrong?" asked Kadis.

"Nothing."

"You didn't walk?"

"No. The car's at the foot of the steep."

Kadis laughed as she sprang to the saddle.

"Are Beauregard and I to ride in the tonneau?" she enquired. "Or do we trot behind, tied to your chariot wheels?"

"Perhaps I need you to tow me in," replied the boy with a smile toward Felsinger. "I'm in the racer, it happens."

Kadis smiled too, nodding her good-bye.

"We'll talk of this again," she said to Felsinger as she rode away.

Phil insisted that she sit beside him in the car and Kadis, though glad to relieve Beauregard who was as tired as herself, remonstrated. She had no wish to have Phil trailing her like this.

"Fine chap, that Felsinger," remarked Phil as they rode off together, Beauregard trotting behind. "Strong as the dickens. You ought to see him handle an axe. He wanted regular work in the camp, but we're full up now."

"He asked me for a position in the school," Kadis answered. "I hadn't quite made up my mind why. I thought perhaps he was back here to help the mountain people."

"No, he's hunting work. Did you tell him there's no salary?"

"We hadn't got to that. I wonder if we couldn't raise him a salary—by subscription."

"It would be a solution," Phil answered after a pause.

Kadis looked at him.

"A solution," he explained, "of what is to become of the school when you give it up. He lives close by; the others have always balked at the trip. He's one of the mountaineers and he understands them. You want the school to go on, don't you?"

"Of course," said Kadis, turning her face away.

'Then—since you think he can do it—I'll pay his salary—whatever you say—while you get him into the way of it. I'll increase it, of course, when he takes it over—after we are married."

Phil spoke with an unaccustomed dominance today, and particularly now since the tightening of their betrothal. What new phases a man discloses, thought the girl, when he approaches the mastery. She had known Phil always, yet she had not known this self that becomes the husband.

Kadis sat long at her window that night, braiding her dark hair, listening to a redstart singing in the garden.

"I reckon I ought to be thankful," she thought, "that there's somebody to take the school. But now—now I've no reason for hanging on to it—afterward. And I know—I know he'll give it up in a little while, just as the others have done, salary or no salary. 'The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling.' "

And she wished Phil were there that she might talk it over with him again.

But Phil at that moment was leaving his racer at the foot of Little Glory to climb the steps in the dark and fare again through the dogwood, past the Felsinger cabin and up the little path.

V

When morning came Kadis had no wish to talk things over again except with Felsinger. What right had she to suppose that the man would abandon the work? He had sought it himself and he was capable, more capable than she

perhaps. At any rate, this month of probation would show what he could do, and what love, if any, he put into the task. She would not mention to him that they considered offering him the school. He might not even care to take it. The chances were he did not intend to remain on Little Glory. This final reflection turned her thought toward him the more eagerly, made her see him in the guise of a timely blessing.

She left home early, before Phil had come down to breakfast, and, reaching the cabin, came upon Felsinger, clad in overalls and nailing away at the porch roof.

He climbed down at once, put the old door-stone in place before the porch and helped her to alight. Then he went inside for the hickory chair and reappeared without the overalls. Kadis noticed that his hair had been freshly cut and the tweed suit pressed. The old boots had been discarded for stout new shoes.

"He hopes to begin teaching today," she thought. "Well, why not?"

"I suppose they'll require that I take some examinations," Felsinger remarked when the amount of salary had been agreed upon—the same salary the public school teachers in Innessburg were getting, not adequate, explained Kadis, but likely to increase as time passed—"I'm pretty rusty on the algebra."

"*They* require nothing," answered Kadis. "*L'état, c'est moi.* I'll take you on faith—for a time, at any rate."

And presently she rode away, admonishing him to come later when the porch was finished and when she had prepared her pupils for the new assistant.

Felsinger arrived at recess. Kadis took him into the school building with its two low-ceiled rooms filled with rough benches. The boys and girls crowded about door and windows staring in at them.

"Your class-room is the present dining-room," she explained. "Miss Miles always used it for that, you remember. No—she hadn't started the lunches when you were here. The girls do the cooking and the boys the carrying. I mean they bring the water and the wood and make the fire—things like that. You may be sure they rebelled at this 'woman's work' as they called it, but they found they didn't get any dinner unless they helped. Some days we make light bread, but usually it's biscuits or corn pone. Our garden is down there by the spring it's going to be extra fine this year if crops don't fail. Last year we put up beans and peas and even made blackberry jam. The shed you see out the back door there is our kitchen. On clear days we eat outside." She looked at her watch.

"It's time to start lunch now. You'll see how nimble we are." And she rang the big bell.

Nimble, indeed. Shad Sprauss, bearing a pail, went blithely to the spring. Two girls on whom the chief duties of the meal devolved, passed with Kadis into the kitchen-shed, with the fire-maker, a lean barefoot youth in their wake. A sandy haired maiden was despatched to Wunderschoen's general store.

"We have lunch early," Kadis explained to Felsinger, as they ate their portion together beneath the trees. "Afterwards we do better work because some of them come hungry.

Do you know what one of them once told me he had had for breakfast? 'Corn liquor and a raw turnip.' "

Felsinger laughed, but Kadis felt herself flush.

"I forget you were one of them once," she added.

"Why not?" asked the man. "Why not forget it?"

They divided the classes that afternoon, Kadis reserving the smaller and more backward pupils as well as the fire-maker of that day, a melancholy, lazy boy, who she felt might discourage a newer hope than hers.

But before the next week was out Felsinger had Joel too, and Joel was suffering a sea-change into something rich and strange. He even became fluent at composition-writing, a thing at which he had always balked with Kadis.

"I let him write in poetry," explained Felsinger. "It's crude as the dickens, of course, but his work makes me think of an old minstrel twanging away and declaiming the exploits of Lord Marmion or somebody. I'll get him down to prose in a little while."

The boys and girls loved Felsinger in their reserved and silent way. Their love was not fathered by the feeling that he had once been one of them, for they seldom thought of that. While Felsinger himself may not have been aware of the difference his presence made in the general behavior, Kadis herself could detect it in a hundred little ways.

For one thing, on the Monday following Felsinger's installation, Shad Sprauss was discovered as moist and shining as his fellows. Again, there was no bickering as to who should sweep the school room at the day's end, the only stipulation being that Mr. Felsinger should observe who had the broom; while the attire of the ladies suggested much

private routing of trunks and reckless inroads on the Sabbath reserves of ribbon.

Kadis did not resent this division in her kingdom. Her kingdom was so soon to pass from her hands and its allegiance transferred entire. Moreover, she still had, for the little time left to her, the portion she liked best—the smaller children and their lessons, with, on certain days the drawing and basket-weaving in which the whole school joined, and on certain other days, the sewing class for the girls. Felsinger, on this road they traveled together for a little while, had taken the burden leaving her the song.

Mrs. Leigh had wished to meet the young man with whom her daughter was being daily thrown, and Kadis duly asked Felsinger to call. With what seemed to her characteristic mountain shyness he remained away. The month was drawing to a close, his salary must be paid, and perhaps the subject broached of his taking over Little Glory School.

There was no hurry about this last. Kadis and Phil would not be married until midsummer. In setting the earlier date they had reckoned without the preliminaries that go to make a wedding. Miss Joy, the dress-maker, who had always planned to make Kadis' wedding-gown, held up her hands in dismay at this headlong haste and waved to the pile of Easter frocks that could not be put aside. Besides, as Mrs. Leigh pointed out, the gardens would be so much lovelier in latter June.

So discussing the future of the school with Mr. Felsinger might wait, but his salary certainly could not. For some reason Kadis wished Phil to attend to this. Phil was donating the salary—why shouldn't he pay it in person?

"Phil and I are coming to call on you some evening," she said as they parted at his cabin step one afternoon; he had walked beside her as she rode from the school. "Are you always at home?"

"Always," he answered briefly.

"I believe if you get to know Phil you will take courage to come and see us," she explained. "I really want you to come," urging him as she would never have urged a man of her own world. "I want my people to see what our mountain school can do."

"If I thought it would help the school," he answered, a smile hovering about his mouth. "But out there in the world there are wiser eyes than yours. Your eyes are very young, remember, and very blue. Don't you think blue eyes are inclined to clothe all things in celestial light?"

"Then they see true," smiled Kadis. "And when we come —won't you read us something you have written? . . . You know I don't read many magazines. I know almost nothing of the new writers. Won't you read us some of your work?"

"When are you coming?" he asked after a pause.

"Suppose we say a week from tomorrow—Friday. We couldn't make it before," she added, conscious that he had not urged her to make it at all.

"Friday, then. Come and have supper with me," he answered, the smile back in his eyes, really hospitable for the first time.

She promised to come and, starting to ride away, turned back to ask,

"Do you use a typewriter?"

"In my own way—though I didn't bring one."

"I have one—an old one loafing about, not doing any good. I took a business course one summer. Phil and I will bring it to you when we come."

And she cantered off, not waiting for him to thank her.

VI

When Felsinger had finished supper that night he cleared the pine table and set the lamp on it; then he took a pad from the drawer of the old wash-stand, and sitting down began to write. He wrote haltingly and after a moment tore up what he had written. Presently he began again, the pencil moving more smoothly. Now and then he looked up, the light quickening in his eyes.

The dawn had reddened the gap in the hills when he finally rose, stumbled to the bed and flung himself across it. But he was up when Kadis passed and walked beside her to the school.

The next night he wrote again, but with scanter progress, while the oil in his lamp burned low and the rain tapped at his windows.

At ten o'clock there came a knock at his door.

He looked up dazedly. Again the knock sounded—at the rear door. He pushed the paper from him and jerked the door open.

Wilda Thorn stood in the darkness outside. The rays of lamp-light fell on her face as she waited silent on the step, regarding Felsinger with grave, half-frightened eyes. Her hair, flecked with rain, hung in a loose braid; she clutched a

little shawl about her and her dress was buttoned carelessly. She appeared to have got herself hastily together after having been in bed.

"Well?" said Felsinger, not over-gentle with the interruption.

She came in at that though he had made no movement to admit her, and glancing behind her into the darkness, closed the door, standing with her back against it, her grave eyes fixed on him again.

"I want you to teach me," she said.

"I teach at the school," answered Felsinger. "You know where that is."

"I can't come to the school. It's in the day-time and they'd see me. I want you to teach me here."

"They would see you coming here," he reminded her. "You can't come at night—like this."

"They don't keer if I come here," she answered quickly. "They won't know I'm learnin'. They'll think I'm cleanin' yo' house. I want you to teach me after school—and on Sat'days."

She saw him hesitate—a hesitation that was chiefly concern for his wavering lamp.

"Come tomorrow," he said, and started toward the table.

"Will you teach me then?" she asked, moving after him, then as he turned toward her with something like impatience, "I want to learn. I—I got to learn. I got to know things. Will you teach me then?"

"After school," said Felsinger.

Her hand on the door, she stood silent for an instant, then,

"How much is it?" she asked in a low voice.

"Bring me some oil for my lamp," Felsinger answered. "That will pay for a long time."

She smiled, nodded quickly and opening the door was gone.

Felsinger took up his pencil, began to write again. Suddenly he stopped—looked up.

The lamp had begun to gutter. The walls of the cabin were dark and bright by turns. The rain droned on the pane.

Felsinger sat staring at the rug before the hearth. It was not placed evenly as when he came, but drawn to one side, nearer the front door. In the failing lamp-light Felsinger stared at it without moving, the fire that his work had kindled, dead in his eyes.

The flame of the lamp flared, went out.

The pencil dropped from Felsinger's hand.

In the darkness he closed his eyes, but he did not move.

The next day was Saturday and Felsinger slept till noon. While he was eating his breakfast Wilda came. She went direct to his lamp, filled and trimmed it, polished its chimney. When he had finished eating she took the kitchen away from him, permitting only that he make his bed. The kitchen was clean—it looked always as if it had been newly scoured—and there was no more to do than clear off the remains of the meal from the new-made shelf that served for a table. As Felsinger's bed-making consisted of rolling the quilt he had slept under and laying it at the foot of the bed, they were both shortly at leisure and sitting in the little kitchen where the yellow afternoon sunshine poured in at the window and the bubbling of an enthusiastic wren shook the cherry-blossoms just outside.

"What do you want me to teach you?" asked Felsinger.

Wilda looked at him in the grave way she had before speaking. There was no misgiving in her eyes this morning. They were clear as brook water. Her dress was fresh and buttoned carefully. Her bright brown hair was brushed into a knot. There had been an attempt to polish her clumsy little shoes.

"Everything," said Wilda.

Felsinger laughed.

"Everything I'd ought to know," she amended.

"But what one ought to know," explained Felsinger, "depends largely on what one means to be."

Her clear eyes fell. She was silent for a moment.

"I want to learn to talk," she said then.

"But you talk very well when you stop and think."

She looked up quickly.

"I don't want to stop and think. I want to talk quick—like you. I want to learn manners, too. Can you teach me them?"

"Perhaps. But I often don't have manners—unless I stop like you, and think. I thought it was school you wanted—books."

"Yes, books. Have you got any?"

"We'll get what you need. Tell me what you've studied."

She told him. She had very nearly completed the course at Little Glory School. But she wanted more than that.

"Do you want to teach?" asked Felsinger.

She shook her head.

"You been down in the world," she said a shade impatiently, "I want to be like the folks down there."

"That's a pity. . . . What books have you?"

"We got the Bible and the Life of Washington. Pap useter read the Life of Washington to us ever' night—'fore he went up. I know it 'most by heart."

"Then read the Bible, Wilda, till I can get in town and get you other books. That won't be until next Saturday night, the night the stores are open."

He rose. Wilda sat still. Presently she said,

"I didn't know we had to buy books. I thought you had it all in yo' head. Joel Dunn said you knowed—" she flushed, "knew ever'thing. Nan don't have books," she added.

"Nan?"

"Hoodoo Nan, over in the ravine. We-all—we-all here on the mountain know what you are."

"I am a teacher," said the man after a pause.

"But just a teacher couldn't do what you done. Miss Kadis ain't done it and she tried—hard. Look at Joel Dunn a-writin' poetry. Look at Annie Hollis a-combin' her hair on week-days, and Shad Sprauss, look at him of a Monday at the spring. Look at how th' ain't no more quirlin' and fightin' at the school house. Look at how yo' light burns all night—like Nan's. And most of all, look at how dumb you keep, not a-talkin' to nobody nor goin' nowheres, ceptin' maybe at night. We know what you are, but I want to ask—"

She rose, glancing behind her.

"I want to know—was it innocent blood—or evil blood you shed?"

Meeting her eyes, the man whitened slowly. He put out a hand as if to close the door but the gesture weakened into a mere groping.

"What do you mean?" he asked, almost inaudibly.

"It don't matter to me," Wilda said quickly. "I know you can teach me no matter what you done. I'd jest like to know—'cause—It *was* evil blood," she broke off, "Wasn't it? You sold yo' self—with evil blood?"

A sudden strength seemed to reach the man. He closed the door sharply, stood with his back against it, facing her doggedly.

"What do you know?" he demanded.

Wilda's eyes fell. The stillness in the little kitchen seemed to throb with terror, her own terror that he might refuse to teach her now that she had found him out. She had had no idea that he would take it like this. She met his eyes.

"I know you're a witch man," she answered, "that's what I know. But I don't know what you kilt. If you kilt a lamb or a rabbit you're a bad witch. If it was evil, like a snake or a wolf, you're a good witch. It—it don't make no diffunce to me—like I say."

The man had sat down, his face on his hands. Wilda saw that his hands were shaking and came closer to him.

"I know it was a varmint," she soothed, " 'cause you're diffunt from Nan. Nan says she kilt a hawk when she sold herself, but ol' Lije Felsinger, yo' pappy, allers helt out it was a wood pigeon. And like I say, it don't make no diffunce to me."

Her hand moved gently to his shoulder. She leaned over him. And then she saw that he was laughing, laughing unsteadily into his shaking hands. She drew back.

"We can't hide what we are," he acknowledged out of his strange laughter.

"No. And we knowed maybe you'd be a witch some day. I heared yo' pappy tell 'bout Nan when she started witchin'. He seed her sell herself to the devil—after she kilt the hawk. And mammy says when you was little you told how you was goin' to do that some day.

"I—I jes' hoped it was evil blood—'cause—"

She glanced at him, saw that he was not laughing now.

"You see you might know ever' thing and—and not know all 'bout witchin'; you done been away so long. I hoped it was evil blood 'cause then nobody can steal from you and you can't be kilt; the pizen dries up when you tech it and the bullet goes flat on ye. I wish I was a witch, that kind o' witch—a good witch."

Again she stole close to him.

"I know—I *know* it was a varmint you kilt. Nobody could tell me diffunt."

The man rose. His hand moved to her shoulder, he met her eyes.

"I wouldn't teach you that," he said. "I wouldn't make a witch of you—any sort of witch."

"But you *will* change me," she asked eagerly. "Like you changed Joel and Shad and them others? . . . I want to learn manners, like I say, and to talk smooth . . ."

"Perhaps that will come. But as you say, I am different from Nan. I do need books. However, by Saturday night I'll probably be rich, so we won't worry about those."

"I'll bring you a chicken," said Wilda. "I got a hen with—"

"I need a hen. At once. I'm going to have company."

"But you can't kill this hen. She's got young uns. I'll steal you two o' Ben's friers instead. They're mine," she added as Felsinger seemed about to decline the offering on high moral grounds. "He stole my dominicker's eggs and hatched 'em under the spring-house. . . . When is yo' comp'ny?"

"Next Friday. Suppose Ben discovers his loss?"

"There's plenty o' chicken thieves 'round these mountains besides me. . . . Can I come Friday and cook yo' dinner?"

"It's in the evening," answered Felsinger, "and I'm afraid you're trying to overpay me."

"I can come in the evenin'. I can cook, too. Miss Kadis learned me—teached me—"

"Taught me," smiled Felsinger.

"Taught me," she repeated slowly. "I—know. I was hurryin'. Can I come? I know how to make biscuit and fry chicken and make mashed potatoes. I'll bake you a cake in the mornin' if you gi' me the flour and sugar. I'll bring you some butter. I do the churnin'," she added significantly.

"I should have to buy the things you want to bring me," answered Felsinger, "so you must let me pay you for them. Your cooking the supper, that's enough."

Her thoughts had darted elsewhere. Again her eyes met his.

"You won't tell Miss Kadis you're teachin' me? You won't tell—anybody?"

"I promise." he said.

Her eyes fell.

"And I—I won't tell Miss Kadis—or anybody off'n the mountain 'bout you . . . I mean 'bout yo'—"

"About my selling myself to the devil?" supplied Felsinger as she paused again.

"I don't b'lieve that," she answered quickly, lifting her eyes. "I don't believe good witches do that."

"Well, it's good of you not to tell," said the man.

Again she was silent, then she announced slowly,

"You don't have to buy yo' comp'ny's supper t'night. You can buy the books instead."

"That's true," he smiled, a second promise in the admission.

He watched her slim brown figure pass under the cherry blossoms and disappear amid the pines. Presently he went back to his manuscript and worked till nearly sundown. When the dark came he walked into Innessburg.

Wednesday at midnight Felsinger stacked the sheets of his manuscript and laid them in the washstand drawer. Next day after school he took the big bed apart and moved it into the smaller bed room. The cot he brought into the large room and spread it with the gayest of the patchwork quilts.

"Now," he observed to Wilda who found him working when she came for her lessons, "down there in the world they would have divers pillows to pile on there—square pillows, round pillows, pink and blue and green pillows—any sort but oblong white pillows such as I possess. No matter. By the simple expedient of moving out the bed I have converted this into a living-dining-room—which is a subtlety you

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may come to comprehend. A school room, too—for that matter, so that hereafter we shan't have to study in the kitchen."

Wilda accepted this without cavil, though in her world the "comp'ny room" was the room that held the best bed—in many cabins the only room there was. Moreover, her thoughts were busy with the matter of pink and blue pillows.

"And on this little table, Wilda—only it would not be pine but mahogany—yes, or oak, very dark and glistening—on this table they would spread a white cloth if they were going to give a supper, and they would call it a dinner. I have only a towel—a nice long towel, very white, it is true—but I don't want you to accept it as a model in table-cloths."

"We got a table cloth," said Wilda. "We got a red one—for comp'ny."

"I have never observed a red one down in the world. But even a red *bona fide* cloth is better than a towel. If you could lend it to me—"

"I can lend you anything. They're all goin' over to Gibson to hear the circuit-rider. I can come over and start supper soon's they go. I'll bring the friers this ev'nin'," she added eagerly, "soon's it gets dark."

Felsinger sat down by the table where lay those books he had been able to find in the village; Pilgrim's Progress, a dog-eared copy of Genung's Rhetoric, Stones of Venice, a History of England and a "gift" volume of Shakespeare, bound in dark blue ooze.

Wilda was taking Pilgrim's Progress and the history home with her, studying at such moments as she was unobserved.

She had come now with several pages of Pilgrim copied in her round even hand, Felsinger having hit on this device to keep her from reading the books too fast; it improved penmanship and made for accuracy. Moreover, for every fourth page she read she was enjoined to memorize a paragraph. But Wilda galloped steadily even with the bit in her teeth. The dark blue Shakespeare was her goal and she could not touch it until she had mastered all the rest, Genung and the history excepted.

The lessons went forward with Felsinger pausing now and then to say, "Bunyan talks like a mountaineer. I want you to think it over and tell me why." Or closing the history to remark, "I have seen Conway Castle with its walls as thick as this room and its banquet hall as long as from here to the steep. They didn't give suppers then, or dinners, but banquets, and the great lord sat at the head. . . ." Or to tell her about the Bayeux Tapestry with its striped boats and its red and blue horses, or about the nunnery that Queen Matilda built as a penance for marrying her cousin—all in the Norman town of Caen.

"Is it wrong to marry yo' cousin?" asked Wilda.

"They thought so. They thought it meant eternal fire. William built a monastery to atone. He is buried in the church which stands there still."

"Did that get him shed of the fire?" asked Wilda.

Felsinger confessed that he did not know.

"It must be more'n wrong to marry yo' cousin," ventured Wilda, and Felsinger, thinking no doubt of Ben, surmised that it was, and passed on to the Plantagenets.

VII

On Friday evening Coral Valentine, curled in Judge Hoxie's comfortable arm chair, explained to Mrs. Leigh why she was there.

Mrs. Valentine was a slight boyish figure in white sports clothes. She had pale yellow hair, cropped short, a round face and round brown eyes that had the hard glaze of polished topaz, their light lashes curling back like the petals of wide open daisies. Except for her length as she lay in the arm chair, she might have been six years old.

"Jack's aunt is coming through from Washington," she explained. "If I'm at home she'll stay all night. If I'm not Sanda is to give her her dinner and say I'm out of town, and she'll take thirty-six and go on home."

Trains are designated in Innessburg by the numbers on their engines and not by their scheduled hours of arrival.

Mrs. Leigh bent nearer the window. She was crocheting, sending the long ivory needle in and out the bright blue meshes of a sweater for Kadis. She crocheted now during much of her leisure—doylies for the polished old table; heavy lace to border the bed-spread that three years before she had laid unfinished in Kadis' hope chest to take up knitting in its place; tams for her daughter who was rather ruthless with head-gear. It was pleasant work after the gray procession of socks she had sent out during the war, chiefly to Phil whose boat had never left the harbor at Norfolk.

"But Coral," she said, not looking up from her work, "oughtn't you to see your aunt? It's some effort to stop off between trains."

Mrs. Leigh could remember Miss Valentine, a correct if somewhat melancholy person, always in black for somebody, "Aunt Hannah," dear Jack Valentine had said, "dearly loves to mourn."

"No," answered Coral, curling more securely in the judge's chair. "She only wants to wig me for going out so soon. She thinks I ought to stay penned up for the next ten years. It seems funny to me that the people who talk the most about Heaven and the joy and bliss their loved ones have gone up to are the very ones who draw the longest faces and wear the most crape."

Kadis came in at that moment and Mrs. Leigh was spared the necessity of replying. She believed in Heaven with all her heart, but there were, she felt, certain tokens of respect due the dead. Coral's widowhood had been a sudden shadow that had seemed to dissolve overnight. Within six months she had called, wearing a smart white taffeta frock with a black sash. "That black sash," Kadis had remarked "is the last of poor Jack Valentine."

And so it had proved. But Mrs. Leigh had no wish to assume the rôle of the aunt whom Coral was endeavoring to escape.

Kadis switched on the lights and greeted Coral whose voice she had heard as she came down the stair. Mrs. Leigh glanced at her daughter's dress in some surprise. It was a summery thing of pale blue chiffon, not intended for immediate wear and not quite the toilette for a mountain evening. ("But after all," Kadis had reflected, "a dinner is a dinner.")

"Were you going out?" Coral enquired, then after her fashion, followed the question with another.

"Is that one of the new dresses? . . . I told you, didn't I? that Ellen Seftone is to be married in July."

"Seftone?" queried Mrs. Leigh. Jack Valentine had brought Coral from Washington and she often mentioned people of whom one had never heard.

"My western cousins," explained Coral. "Ellen has had such a time getting married—to this man, I mean. One thing after another has happened. First he had an accident that left him sort of batty. Ellen managed to overlook that. Then something went wrong with the wonderful bridal present he had for her. Then his father lost the family fortune in a wheat deal. That was the climax and Ellen broke it off. Now he's got back his wits, as it happens, and he's bought her another present—something equally wonderful—and his father has tackled oil and made back all that he lost and more. I'm going on for the wedding."

"You'll miss mine then," said Kadis who was only waiting for the moment in which she could slip away without involving herself in adieux.

"I thought of that," admitted Coral, "but you know you haven't asked me to be in the wedding and Ellen has," a retort that left Kadis rather at a loss, but Coral filled the confused silence with cheerful exoneration.

"Of course out there they don't mourn the way we do—and besides they won't know. I'm not big enough to be matron of honor, so I'm just to amble along with the bride's maids. It won't make any difference where they don't

know. I think I'll stay down there a month or so—keep Aunt Nellie company while Ellen is on her honeymoon."

Mrs. Leigh looked up from her work.

"Kadis," she said, "if you and Phil are going out, you'd better go. Where is Phil? . . . Coral will excuse you, I know."

Kadis had a desperate instant. Coral spoke.

"Phil is in the drive—in the racer. I saw him when I put my golf sticks in the rack. You know, Kadis, I was out at the Country Club when they 'phoned Miss Valentine's wire saying she would stop off between trains. I told them to send the message on to my house. Then I 'phoned Sanda that I was leaving town. She can lie now with a perfectly good grace, and the unopened telegram will be there to support her. If you and Phil are going out," she added, "I can go with you."

Kadis looked at her mother. It was because of this customary obligingness of Coral's that she had elected to depart unobserved. Coral rose, shaking down her short skirt, taking her hat and scarf from the table.

"I'll get my clubs tomorrow," she offered, and moved into the hall, her low white shoes making scarcely a sound.

"Please tell her to stay," Kadis whispered to her mother. "It's different where we are going. I'm not at all certain she'll be welcome."

Mrs. Leigh counted three stitches.

"Kadis, dear," she said, "I haven't liked the idea of your going without a chaperon."

"But on the mountain—"

"I know. On the mountain you think you are lifted above the conventions, but it isn't true."

"And Phil and I are engaged," protested Kadis, resisting the temptation to point out that Coral herself was likely to be the only one in need of chaperoning. What did Mrs. Grundy amount to if she could be pacified by such as Coral?

"Kiss me, dear," said Mrs. Leigh. "And wear your heavy cloak for your dress is thin. You'd better lend your other cloak to Coral," she added. "The ride home is likely to be cold."

Coral was already in the racer beside Phil.

"I hear you're going to take supper with a mountaineer," she remarked, rising to sit on Kadis' lap in the confined spaces of the racer. "I think Phil's afraid his host won't have enough for the three of us. If Phil's a gentleman he'll give me his share."

Kadis gave her the cloak and asked,

"Is the typewriter there?"

"I'm standing on it," said Coral, "Get in."

The evening had grown cold—"Blackberry winter," said Phil—and when they climbed the steep they found a bright fire blazing in the cabin. Felsinger, coming to welcome them, left the kitchen door open—it never would stay shut—and there stole after him the rich odor of baking rolls. He accepted Miss Leigh's guest with no indication of surprise, bringing presently a fourth plate to lay on the pine table which stood now in the center of the room, draped with a red cloth and graced with a jar of cherry blossoms. Phil, seeing no other place for it, set the typewriter on the floor in a corner.

"The dear," thought Kadis, glancing about the room. "How clean everything is! It looks almost as if he had washed the rugs—and that couch!"

Felsinger came over to her.

"I see you are admiring my pink and blue pillows," he said. "My little neighbor made them for me. I think she traded butter at the store in Wunderschoen to get the goods. The effect is—*wunderschoen*, as you see."

His voice was low and Kadis glanced involuntarily toward the kitchen. The door stood open and she saw Wilda standing beside the stove. Their eyes met and Kadis was about to speak when Wilda put out a hand and closed the door. No one else saw the little pantomime unless it was Phil.

Coral stood contemplating the typewriter and spoke for the first time.

"Do you sit on the floor when you write, Mr. Felsinger?"

"No," said Felsinger gravely, "I sit in this." He thrust forward the largest of the hickory chairs. "Won't you have it?"

Coral sat down, stretching her small white-shod feet to the fire. She yawned with the ease and suddenness of a comfortable kitten.

"How hungry riding makes you!" she said.

Felsinger accepted the hint and went into the kitchen.

Kadis, annoyed and embarassed, bent over to straighten the rug which was not drawn evenly before the hearth.

"What is that?" asked Coral, forced to draw back her chair.

It was a long mark running out from the corner of the hearth, parallel with the split logs that made the floor.

"It looks like paint," said Kadis, "or stain of some sort."

"It looks as if somebody had tried to scratch it off," said Coral, bending closer. She looked up at Phil who shook his head, apparently not concerned.

"I know!" Kadis exclaimed, her eyes lifting to the outer door. "It's a noon-mark. They usually make it in charcoal or chalk, that's why I didn't recognize it. When the sun coming through the door there reaches that mark—it's noon. The mountaineers call it 'God's time.' "

She turned and Coral sat down again in her chair.

Felsinger stood in the kitchen door looking at them, apparently listening to what they said. He did not speak as they turned to him and the expression on his face gave Kadis a moment of constraint. She felt she understood his manner, however, when presently he said,

"I shall have to ask you to excuse me. My cook's gone."

"*Gone?*" cried Coral.

"I think I can manage," he reassured her. "She left things pretty well under way."

Coral looked forlornly up at Phil who had never sat down. Kadis followed Felsinger into the kitchen.

Things were under way, as he had said. The rolls had been taken out and placed on the back of the stove, the vegetables covered and removed from the blaze. On the table-shelf waited the dismembered chickens, floured and ready for the fire.

"Give me your apron," said Kadis, smiling in spite of herself as he fumbled with the strings. "It's Coral's being here," she thought, "that makes it seem a calamity. I wonder if he'll read as he promised."

Felsinger abashed could only say,

"I don't know what made her go like that. She seemed in perfectly good humor. Some one must have called her."

"No. It's because your guests are Hoxies. She didn't know that we were coming, did she?"

Felsinger admitted that Wilda had never questioned him as to the personnel of his party.

"She thought it would be just mountain people or perhaps strangers," explained Kadis. "Run on now. Talk to your company."

"And leave you to *cook?*" exclaimed Felsinger from whom she had forcibly detached the apron.

"Exactly—or this nice chicken will be ruined. Think of smearing a griddle like that to fry chicken! You must have fat—deep fat, like this—and it must be kicking. Go on now. This kitchen is too little for us both."

He departed humbly to find Mrs. Valentine alone beside the fire.

"Phil went out," she explained. "Something about the car."

She was curled in the chair now, her bobbed head shining in the firelight. Her round dark eyes rested on him drowsily as he came and stood before her, his thoughts apparently occupied with affairs in the kitchen.

"Kadis says you're a writer," she remarked presently. "What have you written? . . . I never heard of you."

Felsinger smiled and looking at her, seemed to observe her for the first time. He went over to the couch and bring- a pink and blue pillow thrust it behind her. She snuggled against it, half closing her eyes.

"Of course I don't read much," she added then, and after a silence,

"Kadis thinks you write under a pseudonym," she remarked.

She sat still waiting for him to answer her. Presently she lifted herself from the pillow and looked up at him, her eyes drowsy and dark under her thatch of shining hair.

"Tell me your pseudonym," she said softly, as imperiously persuasive as a spoiled child.

Felsinger straightened a burning log, then he met her eyes.

"What *is* a pseudonym?" he asked.

"Why," answered Coral, rather surprised that he did not know, "a pseudonym is a thing to hide behind."

He smiled at her.

"Even so," he said.

Coral took her feet from under her, stretched out her arms in their short sleeves.

"Have you a cigarette?" she enquired.

He took a box from the mantel. She selected one, allowing him to light it for her. Then she curled again into the chair, clouding herself in the smoke, gazing at the fire through half-shut eyes.

VIII

Phil had not gone in the direction of the car, but crossing Felsinger's yard under the cherry trees, had passed through a grove of pines and thence into a clearing, coming by this short cut upon the Thorn cabin where a single light burned in an upper room.

He stood now at the little gate, watching that light. Presently it went out and after a moment the door of the house opened and a light figure appeared, running down the walk in the soft darkness.

"Wilda!" he whispered as she passed him.

She stopped, every muscle in her body arrested. For a moment she seemed not to breathe, her eyes looking into his through the veil of dark. Then she drew back, glancing swiftly in the direction she had been running.

"Go back!" she whispered then. "Go back—quick!"

He moved closer to her.

"Why did you run away, Wilda? . . Was it because I was there?"

"You said you wasn't comin' no mo'," she broke forth, lapsing in her excitement into the old speech. "You said it the last time. Ben seed yo' car that night and he laid fer ye—he laid fer ye! But ye didn't come no mo' . . ."

She started from him but he laid his hand on hers where it grasped her shawl and she did not move.

"Where were you going, Wilda?"

"Over to Gibson. They went ter hear the circuit rider. Ma said I had ter go—and I started. But when they come up with the crowd from Wunderschoen I slipped back. I promised I'd cook supper fer his com'ny. If Ben missed me and come back after me—he'd find me there—and it wouldn't matter. But it was you—and if he comes back—"

Again she started. His hand tightened on hers.

"It's three miles to Gibson, Wilda. You can't go alone."

"I'm not afeared. I'm not nearly as afeared as I would be to stay. Maybe I'll meet him on the way."

The thought took on a darker color and involuntarily she drew nearer him.

"How do I know he ain't a-hidin' there in the pines—right now—ready ter shoot ye?"

"Then I'll go with you," said Phil. "He won't shoot if there's any danger of hitting you."

She tore her hand from him and with the fleetness of a deer ran across the clearing and disappeared in the farther grove of pines.

"Wilda!" he called, staring after her, hopeful that she would wait rather than have him call like that. But when he reached the pines, already the dark had enfolded her. He could not be certain if she had taken the path that led through Wunderschoen or kept on through the grove. He waited, hoping that some rift in the trees would reveal her flying shape. At last he turned back, taking the path himself, and arriving by way of the dogwood thicket at Felsinger's cabin.

Coral beside the fire greeted him through a haze of smoke.

"That car," she observed, "must have required a complete overhauling."

"I'm sorry," answered Phil. "I didn't think—"

"If you'd been playing golf on one lamb chop you'd think."

"I didn't think," finished Phil, "that supper would be ready any too soon, seeing they were fixing it themselves."

Kadis, hearing his voice, put her head through the kitchen doorway.

"Come on," she called, "and carry the pease."

She headed the cavalcade herself, bearing the platter of fried chicken. Felsinger came next with the rolls and gravy, Phil bringing up the rear, a dish in each hand.

Coral from her chair directed the proceedings after the way of Xerxes on the outskirts of his army.

"Mr. Felsinger, your rolls are wabbling. Now Phil, look what you spilt—a perfectly good pea."

"Coral," said Kadis, "go out and get the rice."

Coral obeyed, returning with tidings of a real "'fo' de wah" cake.

Kadis untied the big apron and ran her hand along her slightly tumbled hair. Her cheeks were rosy from the stove. Instinctively she took the foot of the little table. Coral sat at Felsinger's right.

The red cloth, the odd bits of crockery, the maimed cutlery—Felsinger did not direct attention to these by apology, and as the dinner was good, even Coral forgot them. Felsinger, his party safely under way, became a genial and attentive host, and it was well, for Phil, never talkative, had one of his moods, as Kadis phrased it to herself, and Coral said little until she had been helped twice to everything.

Kadis did little more than encourage Felsinger to talk, prodding him on to sundry anecdotes of camp and field, or of his neighbors on the mountain. He needed little prodding, she found, once he had got started. She was glad for Phil to see him like this, and now that the ice was broken and Felsinger had got in the vein, she hoped he would not hesitate to read something, even in the presence of Coral.

He was different with Coral, she observed. She could not define it but it seemed almost as if he knew her or, better, as if he met her on familiar ground. As for herself, it had never seemed to Kadis that Felsinger knew her or strove to know her.

She was justified in her hope, however. In the vein now, Felsinger needed no begging but got out his manuscript and having downed Carol's suggestion that Phil be made to wash the dishes, drew his chair close to the lamp and read them the story of "Ma Jeanette."

Long afterward the glow of the firelight or the sound of some one reading was to recall for Kadis that little half-circle about the hearth; Phil in the corner opposite her, his face lost in shadow, the light playing on his fine long hands; Coral solacing herself with a third cigarette—Coral had supposed that her host was getting out cards when he opened the wash-stand drawer—; and Felsinger, beside her, his bronze head crowned with a nimbus from the lamp behind him, his low voice filling the room. Now and then he paused uncertainly and ran his fingers through his hair.

This was not at the beginning. At first he read rapidly as if, having appeared, he was moved to hurry from the stage. Then the growing weight of the story seemed to hold him back. It was as if he groped through the shadow in which it moved. This was well. It was a story to be read slowly. Its own momentum was as swift and inexorable as a torrent. "Ma Jeanette" went quickly and gaily into the dark.

She had not been born Jeanette. That was the name sung after her by the gamins of the village where she had come from Paris to be near the soldiers. Here, either from lack of accustomed dyes or from the shock and noise of battle, her dark hair turned to gray and love that is really love came to her for the first time; love that was bred of shadow, and breeding shadow in its turn.

When Felsinger had finished reading Kadis sat for a moment very still.

"I knew she would have to die," she said at last. "It was the only way."

"But she did die," Felsinger answered eagerly. "It was inevitable, going as she did past Hell's Corner every night. Nobody knew when the Germans would shell that corner—they only knew it would happen every hour or so. But the young captain must have his milk, she felt. One of the boys said a funny thing, but it didn't belong in the story: 'She lived for wine—she died for milk.' The boys called her 'Maw Jeanette'—like that. And it is true—it really is true—that she looked like somebody's mother when she was dead."

"Because," whispered Kadis, "because she said she was glad they got her on the way back, not on the way there. Surely to say that—to feel like that—wiped out everything else."

"I don't know," he answered thoughtfully. "But I think it is often like that. There is always something of the mother in women's love, something protective, sacrificial; and when the woman is older than the man, as was the case with Ma Jeanette—much older—that element becomes the more intense and the love that much the greater."

"What does he know of the love of women?" wondered Kadis.

She looked at Phil whose face was toward the fire, at Coral, curled in her chair, apparently asleep.

"Do you always write from life?" she asked.

"It is the only school," he answered after a pause. "I drew for a bit—painted a little. I found it easiest to copy the work of others or to draw on my imagination for effects. But copying, I copied other people's mistakes, and following my imagination, I made my own. This doesn't apply so literally to writing, I suppose, for one can't copy there, one can only accept a point of view, but even in writing one must find the truth for one's self."

Kadis looked at the fire.

"What is truth?" she said.

Felsinger smiled and shook his head. He shuffled the pages of his manuscript together and rising laid them on the wash-stand. Coral on his other side stirred but did not open her eyes. Phil and Kadis exchanged a glance and Kadis rose.

"When will you copy the story?" she asked of Felsinger.

He glanced at the typewriter.

"I'll have to discipline my touch somehow," he confessed. "It's rather shy and wild at present. That won't take long."

"It may," said Kadis. She laid a hand on the manuscript. "I'll take this to my uncle's office and copy it inside a day. Then you can be learning on some rough work."

"If your office is a business one—" began Felsinger.

"I'll make it a business one," she smiled, "and charge you the regular price."

"And the typewriter," he added. "I am renting that."

"Certainly not," stated Phil, standing beside the fire.

Felsinger looked at Kadis.

"I feel like a profiteer," she answered. "It's such a wreck though they swear they've patched it up. I'll let you have it for a dollar a month and if you keep it a year it's yours."

"Maybe he'd rather give it back," suggested Phil who appeared to be waking up now that the evening was over.

"That's all right, too," agreed Kadis, rolling the manuscript in her hands.

Phil came over to where they stood and handing Felsinger his cheque for a month's salary, thanked him for the help he was giving Kadis and took up his hat and coat, hastening to get away before he should say something that Kadis would prefer unsaid. She had told him for one thing that he was not to approach Felsinger on the subject of his taking over the school when she left. Felsinger might suggest this himself, so Phil got into his coat and added that he would start the car, a remark that has assisted many another precipitate departure.

"The school," Felsinger said to him, "is it—I have never understood how it is run, because I have not enquired. Is is under private ownership?"

"It is endowed," Kadis answered, permitting the mantle of the word to fall discreetly about the cheque he held. She knew the mountain pride. He would never desire to receive his wage from Phil.

"I see," said Felsinger, and to Phil, "You are custodian."

"Exactly," answered Phil, and to arrest the subject there, offered to substitute bills for the cheque if Felsinger would find that medium more convenient.

He was unprepared for the readiness with which Felsinger accepted the suggestion, explaining that the banks were always closed when he got to town. Phil who for a moment had feared he had not sufficient currency with him, cashed

the cheque and went, pausing near the door to shake Coral's chair.

Kadis allowed Felsinger to help her into her cloak. She held out her hand.

"Are you going to call?" she asked.

"I am," he replied, and added, "I have wanted to come."

"I understand," she answered. "You have so little time for your writing—and people distract you."

"*You* don't," he said at once.

Coral spoke from her chair.

"I hope I distract you, Mr. Felsinger."

"Get up, Coral," said Kadis. "It's ten o'clock."

Coral came toward them slowly, blinking her round eyes. Felsinger laughed as he held the other cloak for her. She snuggled into it, blinking still, wrapped the scarf about her throat and padded to the door on her soft white shoes.

Felsinger went with them to the car, the lamp in his cabin window lighting their path. They called a last good night as they rode away and Felsinger waved to them, going up the steps of the incline.

"Back to wash the dishes," yawned Coral. "Well—I liked his voice. It's nice to sleep by—like the sea."

She would not alight at her gate until Phil had gone in first and reported on his return that Miss Valentine had come and gone.

Late that night when she had undressed, Kadis opened her window upon the dark and perfume of the garden. The stars were very large and near. Somewhere in the darkness a bird was uttering a lost low cry.

"The sad things haunt us most," said Kadis softly, and she crept into bed murmuring,

"Ma Jeanette, en avant!
Pour le roi et le drapeau!
Ma Jeanette. A l'assaut!
Ma Jeanette! . . . Ma Jeanette!"

IX

Next day being Saturday, Lou Attie Morse came by in her electric for Kadis. Lou Attie and Kadis had been appointed a committee of two to wait on Mrs. Hatch who was entertaining the Pierian Club at its quarterly open meeting and who was having difficulties with her programme. Kadis had looked for difficulties—she knew Mrs. Hatch—and she had found them. Whether they were due solely to Mrs. Hatch or partly to the performers themselves she could not determine, but she had supposed them smoothed beautifully away and had betaken herself with Felsinger's manuscript to Judge Hoxie's office.

Mrs. Morse having called at the house, climbed breathlessly back into the electric. She was a stout swarthy woman with fine black eyes and brows, dressed in expensive if somewhat dowdy clothes. She had always the look of having just emerged from a whirlpool. The atmosphere of her home, that place of wild door bells and wilder telephones, of rushed meals and frantic servants, clung about her as she fled from one appointment to another. The

wonder was that she found so much to do in Innessburg. But Lou Attie belonged to everything in town.

"I tried to get you on the phone," she panted, having found Kadis in the judge's office at the quiet old Court House. The judge was out, as it happened, and Kadis was making the most of his absence while the tidy little stenographer sat by the window finishing a jubilant poppy on a mellowing centerpiece.

There was no gainsaying Lou Attie. Her whirlpool engulfed whatever she clutched at. Kadis went with her to Mrs. Hatch who hailed them somewhat tranquilly after her late signals of distress.

Mrs. Hatch was a broad, low statured little woman with a wide, smiling mouth and protruding, somewhat wandering eyes. She had always reminded Kadis of a frog, and her hoarse rumbling voice had seemed to accentuate the illusion.

She lived in one of those old houses whose front porches had been chopped off and run over by the more recent street. Opening her little hooded door, she led them herself into a bright room where a new baby grand piano of white maple contrasted oddly with the ripe dark mahogany of the other furnishings. There were water colors on the wall, too—merry little landscapes in gold frames that looked as if they were flouting the venerable print of George Washington above the mantel-piece.

Kadis had seen the water colors before. She knew that they were the gift of Marion, Mrs. Hatch's daughter, who was at a conservatory in the East. She took them as resignedly as George Washington appeared to do. But the

piano! In that corner had always stood the old, old case of musical glasses which Mrs. Hatch played now and then with a moistened finger. Mrs. Hatch had rather nice hands, so white as to suggest much care and "bleaching." The sleeves of her lavender, golden-flowered tea gown were cut short at the elbow leaving freedom for frequent undulatory movements of her wrist.

"Marion's piano," she explained, with one of those wave-like gestures. "She won it in a contest. I knew it was coming and that's why I changed the programme from Greek drama to music. But now—"

And she related to them how Miss Willis who was to perform upon the harp had fallen ill and Mrs. Howells who had been engaged to play all the accompaniments on Marion's piano had been called out of town because her little boy had fallen out of a hay-loft somewhere. The club always engaged some one to play its accompaniments, but it did its own singing and read its own papers.

"Isn't there some one—" panted Lou Attie.

And after she and Kadis had got through racking their brains and making suggestions as to how and with whom they might patch up the breaking programme, Mrs. Hatch whose mild protruding eyes had been resting on the book-case behind them, remarked pleasantly,

"I have arranged to have the Russians."

It seemed that Mr. Hatch had picked up something of Turgenev on the train and it had given his wife an idea for her next party. Now that her plans for this one had collapsed she might as well have that next party now.

"But it's only a week from today," protested Kadis.

"Russian costume," rumbled Mrs. Hatch, "peasant or royal, it doesn't matter. And, as you say, it's only a week off, so you and Lou Attie will have to prepare the papers yourselves. We have to have people we can be sure of."

Then when Lou Attie had made gusty excuses,

"You're to take Andreev, Kadis," she added, "and to you Lou Attie, I've assigned Tolstoy. Isn't it a pity we can't get caviar for the refreshments? But then the Russians serve a sort of fish in gelatin—"

"If I only had," sighed Kadis, "a little boy to fall out of the hay-loft." That was on the way home.

Kadis had all but deserted the Pierian during the war. Her services were given now as a sort of penance for that desertion. Her mother saw to it that she gave them. Mrs. Leigh was on the retired list now, as she described it. Why were not the younger members interested in the club as she and Lula Hatch and Betty Fairfax had been when they organized it? Did women no longer care for the aesthetic and the intellectual? Was it all dancing and cards and war—and, with Kadis, Heaven knew what besides? But Kadis and Lou Attie had worked very hard on this defunct programme. Both their mothers were interested.

"If only," gasped Lou Attie, "I were not a fool!"

She had promised not only the paper on Tolstoy but to induce a certain visiting lady to favor them with a Russian dance. There would be a third paper on Dostoevski whose author must be secured by Kadis.

Kadis finished the copying of Felsinger's story and telephoned Phil that evening to call for her at the public library.

She had not time to explore Andreev to his depths and finally came away bearing what she had been assured was his most cheerful tale, "The Seven Who Were Hanged."

Phil was emerging in a degree from the fog-mood of the day before. As they drove home through the quiet, dusk-filled streets Kadis ventured upon the subject of their wedding—of its postponement, an idea which had been growing in her mind.

" 'Till August, Phil; that's when the new term begins. Then I can be sure of Mr. Felsinger. He'll take hold—be glad to; there's no doubt of that. But we've started things together—new things—"

She would not have been surprised if he had answered impatiently that he could not get away in August, or even if he had complaisantly agreed—so much depended on Phil's mood—but she was not prepared for the heavy silence that followed her words. She had almost decided that he had not heard—was thinking of something else—when his answer came.

"How much longer do you think I can wait, Kadis?"

"But it's only two months, Phil. There's been no date set and Mother was saying yesterday she hardly had time to get out the invitations. I haven't said anything to her; I wanted to see you first."

He replied at last,

"Just as you say, Kadis."

She found it harder to persuade her mother. There was the matter of the gardens, for one thing, so different in August from what they were in June. And as for the invi-

tations they could easily be managed if only Phil and Kadis would determine on a date.

In the end Kadis had suggested,

"Of course I might go on with Little Glory after I'm married."

Mrs. Leigh said,

"Of course not. The end of August then—the twenty-eighth." That was the day the new term began.

That night after supper Kadis telephoned the entire roster of the Pierian and found no one who at this late hour would take the paper on Dostoevski. Lou Attie however, called her when she could get her to say that the visiting lady had consented to dance and had sent home for her costume.

"A bunch of grapes and something or other," said Lou Attie.

The next night Felsinger called. Kadis was upstairs with Andreev, and Judge Hoxie and Mrs. Leigh talked with the visitor. They found him a very pleasant young man, somewhat reserved but a good listener, and they were very indistinct as to who he was.

Kadis came down at length and in the conversation that followed the stranger's identify was made clear. Judge Hoxie retired to the library and after a time Mrs. Leigh also withdrew. Kadis had brought down Felsinger's manuscript and it was plain that he wanted to talk it over with her. It was also plain that he would not touch upon it while others were present.

Felsinger's constraint, however, had to do with the business side of the transaction. The new suit he wore and the

white straw hat on the hall table had already disclosed to Kadis with what alacrity and probable completeness he had disposed of his month's salary. She was sorry for the moment that she had deferred to his pride and consented to be remunerated for her work.

"Don't pay me now," she said. "It's Sunday."

She smiled and Felsinger's eyes that always twinkled so readily in response, smiled too.

"But I'm receiving the goods."

"Not officially. It won't go off until tomorrow."

Perhaps tomorrow he would forget.

"How goes the typewriter?" she asked.

He answered that he was fast becoming expert and had started another story. Then lest the rent of the typewriter be mentioned too, she suggested that they go into the garden.

A slim new moon that Kadis had not seen was already high in the heavens. It made a misty glow like a little taper flame. The bridal wreath became a white foam and yonder against the wall the tall belladonna larkspurs looked like fairy ghosts. There was the smell of lilies-of-the-valley where they lurked in the deeper shadows, of pinks and pansies and wild geranium.

In the narrow box-bordered walks Kadis moved now and then ahead, her dress in the moonlight as white as the bridal wreath. She showed Felsinger the rhododendron bush that was a hundred years old, and the tree that Thomas Jefferson had planted, and the rose-bush from which her grandmother's grandmother had picked a red rose to pin on the Marquis

de Lafayette as he rode down the drive. The Marquis wrote back that it had brought him luck.

"I wish it were in bloom tonight," said Felsinger gravely.

"I will give you a tulip instead," Kadis answered.

And she bent into the shadow and broke one from its stalk and thrust it into his buttonhole.

"There are columbines in there," she told him, "and these are peonies along the curve of the drive—every color, row upon row, so that they make a rainbow. But when there's been a rain and they ought to play their part, you should see them—all shaggy and tousled and groveling."

They passed the open library window. Kadis could see her uncle reading beside the lamp.

"Is that where Lafayette rode away?" asked Felsinger looking down the shadowed drive.

"Right there," she said.

"With a red rose in his coat!" mused Felsinger.

"Aren't you satisfied with your tulip?" she asked, leading the way again. "Wait until June. . . . I am taking you to the summer house, but first—"

She turned, went down a flight of turf steps and they stood before a pool, dim and silver as if it had been a disk cut from the night sky. Open lotus flowers lay on its surface and all around it rose torches of white phlox.

"This is the place I love best," said Kadis softly. "Even when it was empty I loved it. Phil and I used to play down here all the time then. The rocky pool bottom was our grave yard. I've an idea that in some far future age geologists will unearth the head of my doll or the bones of my canary—and marvel. The garden was all ragged and forlorn

then, but in those days I had never seen it any other way. I thought gardens were meant to be jungles—and I liked it. . . . Those tall things over there are marten boxes. The birds never did desert us—even in those days. They staid on—like old Uncle Eph and Aunt Dilsey. That is my window," as they turned toward the house again. "The bushes beneath it are lilacs. They are almost gone now."

Felsinger stopped to look up at the window.

"You must be able to see Little Glory from there," he said.

"I can. I can almost see your cabin. Now we'll go to the summer house. I've left word for Phil to join us there."

She had also left word for Phil to bring his violin, not knowing if he would comply. He might if he were in the mood for playing or if he thought Felsinger would care to listen.

Phil was in the summer house before them. He had not brought his violin, but at Kadis' request he went and fetched it, and played and played until the moon had gone down and all the garden was dark. Sometimes he would drift from one piece to another. Oftenest he would brood a moment then lift his bow again.

It was late when Felsinger left. Phil insisted on driving him and they rode off together.

"Mrs. Hatch says you're to call her up," said Mrs. Leigh as Kadis passed her door. "I suppose she's still awake. I didn't want to disturb you while Phil was playing."

Mrs. Hatch was still awake.

"I saw Coral Valentine this afternoon," she said, when Kadis had aroused a sleeping "central" to her task. "She tells me there's a writer on the mountain—a celebrity.

Don't you think we could get him to read some of his work for us next Saturday afternoon?"

Kadis was afraid not. Besides, Mr. Felsinger was not a celebrity—that is, not under his own name.

"So Coral said," answered Mrs. Hatch. "I thought we'd just introduce him as an anonymous celebrity. Then perhaps they'll think he's one of the Russians. There's nothing like the eternal fitness, you know. And if you can get him we won't need the paper on Dostoevski."

Kadis said she would try. After all, why not? At the first sound of Mrs. Hatch's request she had automatically spread her wings in the hope of protecting Felsinger and his shyness from those encroaching fingers. Now that she thought it over, it seemed not a bad idea for him to appear and read before that gathering. There was hardly a woman among them whom Kadis had not endeavored to interest in Little Glory School. They or their husbands gave money to other causes liberally enough. Now, seeing what Little Glory in its poverty and obscurity, could produce, perhaps they would consent to notice the waif on their own doorstep.

She would certainly take care that they did not confuse Felsinger with the Russians.

Before she went to sleep she planned how she would put the matter before him. She would approach it from the angle of the paper on Dostoevski. She would explain how she had tried to find a writer for it and had failed; how the programme was about to fall through. . . .

He could not refuse.

And she fell asleep, seeming to hear still Drdla's "Serenade" as it fell, rich and yearning, from Phil's violin.

Phil was in the library, talking with his father. He had taken Felsinger to the foot of Little Glory and Judge Hoxie had called to him on his return.

"Kadis is still interested in the mountain, I believe," the judge was saying, having arrived at that point by a circuitous route which brought out news of the wedding's postponement.

"For my part," said Phil, "I don't want her to stop; only the night work—she shouldn't do that."

"Charity, unfortunately, is like society," the judge remarked. "One must go everywhere and all the time—or not at all. Now this interest in the mountain and in mountaineers—"

He took off his glasses and looked at Phil. Phil wondered what was coming.

"Interest in a class may crystalize into interest in an individual," said Judge Hoxie, and Phil instantly looked away. Judge Hoxie did not like any shiftiness in his son's glance. His voice took on a heavier tone as he went on.

"This Felsinger is a new development, a proof, we might say, of what Kadis has contended for; a reason for the faith that is in her."

Phil's eyes returned to him.

"It's no new development to Kadis," he returned. "She may be glad to exhibit Felsinger to you and Aunt Adelaide, but she's bound to have known what the mountain people are when they have a chance. They are just like other people—that's all."

Judge Hoxie looked down at his glasses, twirling them slowly in his hands.

"They are something more than that," he said. "They have lived so close to the earth and the sky that they keep something from them both—something we have lost. If Kadis were engaged to any one but you—"

He was thinking of the instinct which draws two people together across the barriers of class, and of what a good thing it is for the race; but he had not the full courage of his heresy for he stopped short of preaching it to his son. That Phil and Kadis should marry each other was in these days his most deeply-rooted desire. In marrying Kadis he felt that Phil was somehow acquiring the qualities he lacked. At any rate he was securing them for his sons.

"I understand what you mean," said Phil. "But Kadis doesn't fall in love. She's—different."

Nevertheless, he mentioned the matter to Kadis as he rode with her next morning to the foot of Little Glory; mentioned it casually, as something that had not touched his thought till now.

Kadis laughed softly. She thought she had detected in her mother's manner the evening before something of this same anxiety, but that her uncle should have reasoned in this fashion was absurd.

"It would be foolish to fall in love where one couldn't marry," she said soberly, for Phil had not joined in her laughter.

"You could marry him if it weren't for me," answered Phil.

"Don't be ridiculous," flashed Kadis. "How could I marry Mr. Felsinger?"

"It's been done."

"Men, I suppose, do that sort of thing," Kadis agreed, thinking of her uncle. Was that what Phil had in his mind? He had been told of his father's romance when he was very small. How much he remembered of it or how he regarded it in his present familiarity with Cuthbert and its people, no only really knew.

"But his logic is all wrong—uncle's, I mean," added Kadis. "Love for a class is a wide, human sort of thing. It has no kinship with romantic sentiment for an individual It couldn't naturally culminate in that other sort of love."

"He said interest," Phil reminded her, "not love."

"It's true, of course, as regards interest," she admitted. "But he meant love. Otherwise, why should he have warned you?"

Her amusement was passing into resentment.

"In the first place," she explained, "Mr. Felsinger would never ask me to marry him. Not that he would be conscious of any incongruity in the idea; it simply would not enter his head. If he cares for any one, it's that little Wilda Thorn, and that's quite as it should be. But so far as I can see, he is wrapped up in his work."

Phil said no more. They had come to the foot of Little Glory and Kadis presently turned her horse's head and went up the incline. There she stopped, watching Phil as he trotted toward Colfax Valley. Sometimes he turned and waved his cap to her, but not this morning.

Why should her uncle have wished to injure Phil's faith in her, she thought with a hot swelling of the heart. Faith in each other would be the finest thing they would have to build on in the years to come.

X

Felsinger declined to read before the Pierian, declined with a definiteness that left no room for argument.

Kadis did not see him that morning until recess. She met him then as he came from his class-room to join the older boys whom he was teaching to play baseball.

He scarcely permitted her to explain about the paper on Dostoevski. She had counted on his diffidence and she knew that he was not the man to relish appearing before a woman's club. But she had never asked a favor of him and she had not stinted in extending them. Felsinger seemed to have no recollection of these last and Kadis herself did not recall them until after his refusal to make so small a return. She looked at him an instant unable to keep the hurt out of her eyes. Then she turned and walked over to her desk. Felsinger went abruptly down the steps.

That afternoon he did not walk beside her as she rode home but left the school house in the direction of Wunderschoen, a sandy-haired mob at his heels.

Kadis telephoned his refusal to Mrs. Hatch, making it as sharp and final as possible in the unconscious desire to share the rebuff.

Mrs. Hatch's rich bass boomed back serenely.

"The nice boy! Writers are like that. I'll go and see him myself."

"Just as you like," said Kadis, having no impulse to spread her wings this time.

Next day she regretted that she had not at least endeavored to restrain Mrs. Hatch from such a move. Felsinger

was different now. There was no retreat in his manner, no intimation that he might alter his position of yesterday. There was merely in his eyes an entreaty that she should forgive, that she should not resent. He walked at her side that afternoon, silent for the most part, until he reached his door. There he said,

"I hope some time you will ask something else of me—something really worth while."

"Little things," answered Kadis, "are big sometimes."

But she smiled, for she had already acceded to the entreaty in his eyes.

"Then a little thing. Any other little thing. Any number of them. Can't I write that paper on Dostoevski?"

So he remembered that.

"Perhaps," said Kadis. "That might solve our problem."

For any one would read the paper, once it was written.

She telephoned Lou Attie, that evening, asking that Felsinger be allowed to do this.

"Oh my dear," panted Lou Attie, "I've only been waiting till you got in to phone you. Marion has sent Mrs. Hatch a bust of Bobbie Burns and she's going to change it to an afternoon of Scotch ballads. She thinks—"

"Who'll play the accompaniments?" enquired Kadis, immune to shocks.

But Lou Attie had taken breath again.

"She thinks the bust will look so pretty on the dining room table, all surrounded by thistles and things. Then the musical glasses—"

"Who'll play the accompaniments? But then I suppose they'll have a bag-pipe."

"The accompaniments are so simple she says, that anybody can play them, and then she can get to use Marion's piano. And the musical glasses won't be inappropriate. You see your mountain man wouldn't come and just as she was starting to call on him the bust arrived; and you know, my dear, you couldn't get the paper on Dos—"

Lou Attie gave out of breath.

On the whole Kadis was relieved. She had not so much as begun her paper on Andreev, and now Mrs. Hatch would not ascend upon Felsinger. Kadis had heard of a hawk who once carried off a young calf in its talons. She had thought Mrs. Hatch's call might terminate in some such way. Felsinger would make anything but a pleasing impression if he were brought to the Pierians against his will.

Next day at the lunch hour she told him that they would not need the paper on Dostoevski and later when they parted at his door she gave him a message she had received for him the night before.

"Coral Valentine is giving a party and she wants you to come."

There came into his face the look she had seen there when he refused to read. It passed and he asked,

"When is it?"

"Saturday night. It's very informal—just you and Phil and I. Coral is leaving town. It's a farewell party."

"Thank you," he answered. "I will come."

Did he suppose, wondered Kadis as she rode on alone, that this was one of the "other" little things she had promised to ask him? She had no wish that he should go to Coral's. Knowing his antipathy to parties, she had tried

to dissuade Coral from inviting him, but Coral had been obdurate. And now he was going because he thought she wished it—one of the little ironies that make the jest called life.

That night after the moon had gone down Phil Hoxie rode out Lafayette Pike and leaving his car amid the trees of Colfax Valley, came back on foot and ascended the steps of Little Glory. Felsinger's lamp threw its accustomed light along the path and the incline. There came too through his open window the sound of a typewriter, now hurried, now halting.

Phil passed quickly and coming to the path, turned after a bit into the little tract of open woodland that lay before the Thorn cabin. There he paused, thinking he saw something white moving among the trees at his left.

"Wilda!" he called softly.

She could not possibly have seen him as he moved to meet her but she came toward him swiftly and as noiselessly as a shadow. Her hands reached out—found his.

"Where have you been?" he whispered.

"To Mr. Felsinger's. . . . How long you been here?"

"I thought so. Why do you go to Felsinger's?"

"To take his milk. I was late tonight."

Phil was silent, still keeping her hands, drawing her further into the dark and fragrance of the pines. Her breathing was quick as if she had been running. She seemed to flutter in his clasp like some soft wild thing.

"Do you—like Felsinger, Wilda?" he asked, stopping at length.

"Oh yes!" she replied at once, lifting her face, misty and white in the dark, her eyes shining. "Everybody likes him—everybody he'll talk to."

She felt that she must tell Phil to go. But she had not seen him for so long—not since that night she had run all the way to Gibson and found Ben just ready to start back for her on a borrowed horse. Ben had been asleep when she left the house just now—dozing in his chair.

"Would you marry him, Wilda?"

Her breathing grew more slow. She did not answer. There was no coquetry in her, neither the instinct nor the art. The thought of marrying Mr. Felsinger was new, and she was considering it—along with the possibility of Ben's awaking and coming after her.

Phil drew her closer by her captured hands.

"I'd rather you married Ben," he said.

He did not care to ask himself why. Vaguely he was aware that it was because she would be happier with Felsinger than with Ben. More clearly he was conscious of the feeling that Felsinger with his trained sensibilities would appreciate Wilda, would enjoy to the full her eagerness and warmth, her bright wild loveliness. Ben might marry her; he would never possess her.

Wilda shook her head.

"It's wrong to marry yo' cousin," she said.

"Who told you that?"

She started at the gruffness of the whisper.

"Mr. Felsinger."

"He only said it to keep you from marrying Ben."

"No."

She did not explain that the statement had been drawn from its author in relation to certain historical personages who had built a monastery and a nunnery. She would have shared the secret of her lessons with Phil, binding him to silence, but she could see that he did not care for Mr. Felsinger and would disapprove with probably more violence than her mother might. Suddenly she started, snatching her hands from Phil's to lay them on his shoulders, an involuntary movement as if she sought to shield him. Phil turned and saw that the front door of the cabin had opened and that Ben stood within it, a lean, slouching shape, silhouetted against the light.

"I'm comin'!" called Wilda, a little catch in her throat.

"Stand still till I shut the door," she whispered to Phil, and though he put out a hand to hold her—he still had much to say to her; there was something he wanted her to promise him. Why could they not have kept very still, hidden there among the trees?—she fled from him and vanished inside the house. Ben himself withdrew after a time and the door closed.

Phil waited thinking that Wilda might return. She did not come and at last he went back along the path.

Coral Valentine lived in one of the few bungalows in Innessburg. Jack Valentine had built it just before he went on to Washington to bring Coral back with him. Many times Kadis had gone over the plans with Jack, sitting in the summer house at Roslyn where he would break off from a burning discourse on plumbing to speak reverently of Coral's love for this or that, of her adorable way of curling herself into deep arm chairs—there must be plenty of those,

gay cushiony ones—of her flower-like coloring that called for delicate backgrounds and rare settings, "especially in her own little room there."

Dear Jack! He should have been an artist rather than an engineer. Then possibly he might have painted Coral instead of marrying her.

The place had the look of a nest, yet the great living room was spacious enough with its mellow-toned walls and deep flowery chairs of Jack's designing; its old Bokharas and Beluchistans that had been on the floors of his bachelor rooms, the two or three good paintings on the wall.

Coral did not remain against this background for long at a time, but whether she came or went, her little Finnish maid, Sanda, kept things in perfect order.

No one quite knew how Coral kept Sanda. She had brought the girl home with her after one of her trips, a sort of souvenir of her travels, and Sanda had staid on though there were no other white servants in Innessburg except the Langs' chauffeur, and as Coral didn't speak to the Langs their chauffeur was taboo.

The general explanation was that Sanda had taken a fancy to Mrs. Valentine. So many people did. Coral was one of those individuals whom the stronger or the more industrious of the race instinctively serve. Kadis had been at boarding school with her and she could recall how somebody had been forever writing Coral's compositions or trimming Coral's hats or "doing" Coral's room. She herself was continually divided between a fervid exasperation with Coral and a tendency to wait on her in the same way.

Sanda, it was obvious, endured no such inward warfare. Her fresh face was always pleasant, her little white cap was never awry. The only servant on the place—for Coral drove her own car and stabled her pony down town—to be awake was to be busy with Sanda. She cooked—and such cooking! She cleaned the house and did the finest of the ironing. She answered the telephone and the door bell. She mended her mistress' laces and embroidered silk stockings. She fastened her mistress' frocks when she went out. And when her mistress was quite gone she entertained the taboo Lang chauffeur in her immaculate little kitchen.

Coral reached home late on Saturday evening, having attended the open meeting of the Pierian and taken early dinner with Lou Attie Morse. She found time, however, to slip out of her afternoon clothes into a light indoor thing for she knew that Kadis would have on some such toilette, wearing her trousseau things ahead of time as so many girls were doing now. Coral had heard at the club that Kadis had postponed her wedding. Lou Attie said it was something about Little Glory School. People were beginning to lose patience with Kadis.

Coral called Sanda in to fasten her dress, a little apple-green thing, cut straight like a smock, accentuating her child-like slenderness and the cropped gold of her hair.

"The salad, Sanda—it turned out all right? And you might open that last bottle of cocktails. We've nothing but the home-made wine for supper, I suppose?"

She went into the living room where Wee, the diminutive Pekinese, vacated a chair with an abruptness that might have denoted the instinctive if not the polished gentleman.

Memories of certain caresses that were largely abstracted ear-pullings had taught Wee this spontaniety, a spontaniety not without a tinge of humiliation. Wee was of the most ancient lineage in China and he had sinister, if obscure convictions regarding the antecedents of this capricious occidental who shared his home. They were both, he was more sensibly aware, the protégées of Sanda. Their duties in this house, though contrary, lay in the same direction. *She* welcomed intruders while *he* harshly berated them. Leaving the matter of ancestry aside, and putting their claims to consideration on the basis of their relative usefulness it was plain to Wee that he performed his part of this ceremony with the greater fervor and faithfulness. Nevertheless, she assumed the right to demand that he jump over her fan—the trick Jack Valentine had taught him; a delicate performance when one's length sometimes exceeds one's most careful computations—and slapped him on his august nose when he declined. Never had he exacted such unpleasant activities of her. Well, she seldom followed him into the kitchen where resided their joint mistress and toward which he scuttled now. But Coral was too quick for him. She caught him by the tail, ran her hand along his flowing coat and, lifting him to her lap, fell to pulling his ears and reflecting deeply.

Kadis had not wanted her to ask Mr. Felsinger this evening, reminding her that he had not called. Well, he would call now. Coral felt sure of this and she desired very much that he should. The pampered ones of earth find an impelling charm in those rare individuals who show no wish to serve them. Mr. Felsinger would do very nicely when he learned

not to tell war anecdotes and read his own stuff; when he got out of the state every man got into after Kadis Leigh had had him in hand for a while. Kadis was always making men think they could do things that they couldn't and that there was no use in doing in the first place. There was Jack thinking he knew color and putting money into paintings and crazy-looking pottery. This Jerry Felsinger was too good to be spoiled.

Even with the ear-pulling at its profoundest stage, Wee could hear the bugle-call of a footstep on the porch. He leaped in mid-air to perform his office and Coral followed in her minor rôle. She did not wait for Sanda but went to the door herself, something very like a stir around her heart, for she hoped that it was Felsinger and that they would have a few moments alone.

It was Kadis and Phil, however. Phil left almost at once to go for Felsinger, Wee following him back to the door, scolding about his feet, returning to berate Kadis, then as she sat down, approaching cautiously to sniff at her shoe and falling quiet as her hand descended to stroke his head.

Kadis had on the light blue dress she had worn at Felsinger's little evening the week before. It developed on Coral's enquiry that the trousseau had not got very far. There was the wedding dress of course which must be fitted tomorrow, and one or two little summer things like this. Yes, the wedding had been postponed until August. Perhaps Coral would be back by then.

Coral would not be back. There was always something going on in Mendoza which was more than you could say for Innessburg. Innessburg was a good place to come back to—

when you needed a nap. Wasn't Mrs. Hatch killing this afternoon? Whoever told her she could wear pink? The same person probably who had persuaded the Lang twins that they could sing.

"You know, Coral," said Kadis, watching her hostess make ready the cards and table, "Mr. Felsinger can't afford to play for money. You know that you or Phil always win."

"Don't you allow him to play?" drawled Coral.

"I am not aware even that he knows how," Kadis replied, refusing to be annoyed.

Whereupon Coral allowed herself to be moved and agreed that they should play only for a prize.

On Felsinger's arrival, however, it became apparent that in the realm of poker he needed no man's grace. The game soon lay between him and Coral, for Phil was surprisingly out of luck tonight and Kadis, always an indifferent hand at cards, fell to watching her hostess.

It seemed to her that she had never seen Coral look so lovely or with more evident intent. Her green dress had given to her body the gracile look of a stem supporting some exquisite flower. Her skin had the transparent whiteness of porcelain against the light. Her hair was the gay gold of young jonquils. What was it with all this shining blondness that gave to Coral the elfish look that never left her except when her brightly fringed eye-lids were drooped? Was it the round brown eyes which now and then lifted as she played, their darkness and hardiness, as always, causing the beholder a little start of surprise?

She played with a concentration that she showed in little else, her small mouth compressed, her chin lowered. Now

and then when she made some uncanny or triumphant move her little even teeth pressed into her under lip. Toward the end of the game she appeared to relax, lose interest. Felsinger won.

Coral rose, remarking that the prize was back in her bed room, that first they would eat; and she led the way to the dining room where was spread one of the suppers that had made her house famous in the last two years. Felsinger she directed into the seat opposite her and Phil she placed at her right hand.

Kadis smiled. Coral was making the old familiar moves. Felsinger was placed so that he might look full upon his hostess' face against the bowl of spreading roses that adorned the sideboard. Would Felsinger fall? He seemed different in his manner tonight, as if he observed Coral more thoughtfully than he had done at his own house. Coral herself became anything but thoughtful.

Sitting beside the big coffee urn, she prattled of the meeting of the Pierians. She showed them how Mrs. Hatch had played the harmonica, moving her white hands among the coffee cups and lifting her round eyes to heaven. Then she tied a doyly over her gold head and showed them how the Lang twins had sung Annie Laurie.

Felsinger, his fingers about the stem of his wine-glass, leaned back in his chair and watched her, smiling. Phil who had drunk Coral's cocktail as well as his own—cocktails made Coral drowsy—laughed appreciatively.

"Give us the Lang twins dancing the ballet at the Benefit," he suggested.

Coral was accustomed to bringing down the house with this, tucking up her skirts and stuffing everybody's handkerchief into her stockings. She drooped her white eyelids now and shook her head. She glanced at Sanda, indicating Mr. Felsinger's empty wine glass.

Sanda, standing against the wall, did not move at once. She was looking at Mr. Felsinger. For some time she had been looking at him. On the few occasions when he spoke she looked at him the more keenly. Felsinger seemed unaware of her or of her gaze even when she filled his glass.

"*Bon voyage*, Coral," offered Phil, lifting his glass. "When do you go?"

"Tomorrow," answered Coral as the others drank, and the shadow of a smile flitted over Sanda's rosy face.

"Where do you go?" asked Felsinger.

"To Mendoza," she answered, "out West. . . . What's the matter?" For Felsinger had started slightly, setting down his glass.

"Is it the wine?" asked Coral leaning forward. "We make it ourselves, you know—blackberries. It's the best I could do. You know I think prohibition is just a form of bolshevism. It's bolshevism in a parson's coat. How's yours, Phil?"

Phil assured her that the wine was perfect and Felsinger added his own protestation. Kadis glanced again at Felsinger. She knew that it had not been the wine. The pallor that had come with his start was just now receding.

"How big is Mendoza?" asked Phil who had really meant what he said about the wine. Potent enough it was if one had the patience.

"About two hundred thousand," answered Coral, "built on the flattest piece of ground you ever saw, but prosperous and gay. I've been there once—when the Seftones first moved out. The Seftones are my cousins, Jerry. I like the name of Jerry. I hope you don't mind. Why have you suddenly stopped eating and drinking? . . . If you don't like my wine, you'll have to teach me to make moonshine."

And so her prattle rippled on, neither Phil nor Kadis offering to divert the flow. Coral went to sleep if any one else had the center of the floor. Presently they went into the living room and Coral disappeared to fetch the present. Kadis spoke in an aside to Felsinger.

"Has something gone wrong or aren't you well?"

He smiled at her.

"I thought I had been unusually amiable," he said.

Coral approached with the prize, a small object wrapped hastily in white tissue paper. Felsinger seemed vaguely averse to receiving it. He unwrapped it, however, and as he did so Kadis looked away. It was a gold cigar case of curious design, one that she had seen before. It had been Jack's; some one had presented it to him one Christmas. He had never used it she knew for Jack did not smoke cigars, but it had been his. Coral did do such fearful things.

"Really, Mrs. Valentine," Felsinger was saying, "I can't—I don't like to—"

Coral looked sad, pushing the gift back to him. She went over to Phil and whispered that later in the evening she would do the Lang twin ballet if he would play *"O Ma Foi"* on the piano to do it by.

But it was only a little later that Felsinger took his leave. He refused Phil's proffered lift, saying that he wanted the walk; he had been sitting at his desk all day.

Later when Kadis herself came to go she saw the gold cigar case lying on the piano behind some books.

Coral did not feel that her evening had been a success. What seeds she had sown for future harvest with Felsinger she could not determine. It was hard she felt to put a finger on what he thought or felt. And how he watched one with that half smile of his—just as if he saw all the workings in one's brain and was amused by them. Was it indeed amusement or did the smile disguise a reluctant interest? Or could he really discern one's mental machinery and had he been merely taking her apart to put her in a book?

After his start there at the table—yet it was hardly a start; it was a sort of half-start as his smile had been a half-smile—after that he did not look her way at all, only at his empty wine-glass. What was it that had made him start? Was it anything that she had said? Coral went over as best she could the blithe monologue that she offered for conversation. There had been nothing in anything she had said. Perhaps he had suddenly remembered something.

She had sown but doubtful seeds with Felsinger, that was true, but Phil and Kadis must do their part now when Ellen Seftone came. This was the third time she had asked them to the house since they had had her at Roslyn, and a message from Ellen had announced that she was on the way. Ellen would want her fling with shades of the prison house about to close so soon.

Coral rang for Sanda to unfasten her dress. Sanda's fingers moved deftly at their task and then—she was a little late with these duties tonight—she turned down the coverlet of her mistress' bed and laid her mistress' night robe upon the pillow. Passing softly from the room, she paused in the door. It was not Sanda's custom to engage her superiors in conversation, but tonight,

"This Mr. Felsinger, madam—" she began, and stopped.

"Well?" said Coral.

"He lives in Innessburg?"

"No. He lives on Little Glory. He's a mountaineer."

"Oh!"

Sanda had a very nice voice, the soft Finnish voice which makes all other voices sound boistrous in comparison. Having breathed her little "Oh!" she was about to withdraw when Coral said shortly,

"Why do you ask?"

Sanda hesitated.

"Only that—he is like some one I have seen before."

"Oh!" said Coral, a very different "Oh" from Sanda's, and stared after the girl as she withdrew.

In her own little room beyond the kitchen Sanda sat on the edge of her bed and looked out her window.

"But it could not be," said Sanda in her soft whisper. "It is not—possible."

At this moment Jerry Felsinger in his cabin on the mountain walked with his bag through the open door and out upon the porch. There he stood looking toward Innessburg where the midnight train was due within the hour. A long time he stood there.

Presently he turned on his heel and going back to the door flung the heavy bag within it. It landed across the room. Jerry Felsinger went in again, barred the door behind him, put out the light.

Then he dropped into a chair in the dark and sat unmoving, his head on his hands.

XI

Monday afternoon Wilda Thorn with a covered basket over her arm, took her way into the hills beyond Colfax Valley. In the basket were a pat of last week's butter and a young chicken, gifts to Hoodoo Nan whom Mrs. Thorn desired hastily to placate.

Hoodoo Nan was the "witch woman" of those parts. Old Lije Felsinger had seen her the day at sunrise some thirty years ago when she had gone to the top of old Nebo, the highest mountain thereabout, and in a shrill voice had proclaimed the devil her master. Holding a white handkerchief between her and the red ball of the sun, she had shot a silver bullet through it, according to the ancient rite. Lije had seen the blood drop down the handkerchief, testimony that the devil had accepted Nan and that she was thereby a witch.

One night last week Joel Dunn, returning on foot from Cuthbert, had met Nan prowling the woods in the guise of a black cat—her voice was unmistakable—and had run five miles without stopping, being seized next day with a crick in his side—sure sign that he had been correct in his recognition of Nan and that she had bewitched him.

Mrs. Thorn heard of this mischance and remarked that Nan was a plague-spot and had ought to be tarred and

feathered and run out of the community. That day Mrs. Thorn's cow, Tony, refused to let down her milk and later became ill. So Mrs. Thorn was despatching Wilda with the butter and chicken lest a worse thing come unto her

Wilda in her pink dress and pinker sunbonnet stopped at Felsinger's door to explain that she could not come for her lessons that afternoon. Felsinger laughed when she told him about Nan, and she went down the incline slowly, hoping that Nan in her recess beyond the hills had not heard that laugh. In Colfax Valley her spirits returned to her and she sprang up the farther mountainside, looking from the distance like some bright wandering flower.

She knew the road. One kept to the Cuthbert pike until he reached the ravine. The ravine wound among the hills for a mile and at its end, close to the foot of old Nebo, was Nan's cabin. Wilda had been to Nan once before when Surrey had had ring-worm. Surrey's ring-worm had disappeared within the year which proved that Nan's operations were not all evil. Likewise, on the Cuthbert road lay the cemetery to which Wilda had fared as much as twice for many of the graves within it, first when the sleeper was laid there, and later—sometimes there was the lapse of a year—when his funeral was preached.

She loved the walk. Wherever the road curved about a mountainside she took the short cut, up mossy steeps, fragrant with wild honeysuckle, or down into hollows still wet with honey-dew; through shadowy, flowered jungles of laurel and rhododendron, out upon clearings yellow with primroses or green with young corn. Sometimes she stopped, watching the scurry of a chipmunk or the hovering of a

butterfly; listening to a clear cry of "berry! berry!" from high on a hill. She knew that when the cat bird gave that cry the berries were darkening on some sun-warmed slope, just as when the red bird sang "wet-u! wet-u!" she knew that it was sure to rain, however blue the sky.

When she had climbed to the cemetery, set on the fairest height in all the country-side, she set down her basket, looking thoughtfully at the little lattice-houses built above every grave. Five of her mother's children lay there, buried almost as soon as they were born. Daisies were blowing in the open spaces, and wild vines crept up the lattices. Under the lattice of a small new mound had been placed a broken tea-set and a doll in a red dress. The rains had beaten the doll into the ground.

From this point Wilda could look down on Innessburg, gray and small in its dark company of mountains, a crumb in a giant's hand. Standing at the cliff's edge, her pink dress blowing about her, her sunbonnet pushed back from her face, she watched its faint semblances of life, its people moving slowly, its drowsy vehicles, its one or two factories in their haze of smoke.

What were those cities like of which Mr. Felsinger had told her? They were not drab and quiet like Innessburg, she knew. Paris, for instance, would be like this June afternoon, all shine and color. It would have rosy steeples and radiant pavements and windows glinting like cut gems. London would be gloomy and blue like the mountains—like Nebo yonder. New York—she closed her eyes and drew a deep breath. New York was a light in her eyes, a music in her ears. It was so close, a bright clamor through all her dreams,

but she could not envisage it as she could the others. New Orleans—Carthage—Venice, her spirit had visited these even before Felsinger had told her about them, back in the days when she studied geography with Miss Kadis Leigh.

That seemed very long ago.

She would see these cities with her eyes some day. She would walk their streets and mingle with their people. To this end she studied, to this end she hid the money she could hoard from her butter-making. To this end she gathered the silky aments of the pussy willow and the darkly polished galax leaves for the merchant in Wunderschoen to send to city florists; blue berries and black berries for Surrey to leave at the stores in Innessburg. Some day when she had enough money she would steal down through Innessburg which, gray and quiet though it was, was still the doorway to a magic world—she would steal down, saying good-bye to no one in the world but Surrey, and ride away.

Once indeed she had thought she might go in another way. Never had she meant to marry one of the mountain boys. She knew what that would mean for her—imprisonment here forever. They had no dreams of a world beyond the hills. But once, when Phil Hoxie first came, she had thought that she saw a sudden bright gateway into that world. He had been there—he knew the way. And he had seemed to see her among the other girls in the classes he took for a little while. Once when she had been nutting in Colfax Valley he had come upon her and had carried her basket—no boy had ever carried her basket before, however softly he may have spoken—and had sat with her in the shadow of

an old walnut, talking with her and watching her with eyes that were so dark and yet so full of light.

It was a gateway that closed early. Not because of the thing his father had done to hers; sometimes it was a relief to Wilda that her father was gone, averse though she was to admitting it to herself. Not because of any sense of difference in their stations. The mountain conscience makes no such distinctions. It was merely that Kadis Leigh had once mentioned that she was to give up the school when she married her cousin and that she would like Wilda to prepare herself to take it.

There had followed dark hours, hours that Wilda could hardly understand. She had made no protest when, on the heels of her father's "going up," her mother had kept her out of school. But she wished the more keenly to learn and to hoard against the time when she should go away alone.

Since that day she had seen young Hoxie many times—often by accident, oftener by design on his part—though only twice since May, and always the sight of him had been like a knife-thrust in her side. This she knew was because of the terror his presence brought. Anywhere on the mountain Ben would shoot him from ambush as quickly as he would shoot the older Hoxie—the more quickly, indeed, knowing that this would mean the richer vengeance. But Ben, as it happened, had never come upon his quarry. And now, sooner or later, young Hoxie and his cousin would be married and he would come no more.

Might she be far away when this time came!

Wilda went on more slowly, springing, light and sure-footed, from little crag to little crag, coming again upon the

Cuthbert pike in its uneventful meanderings, turning at length into the ravine.

Hoodoo Nan received the chicken and the butter without remark. Wilda had been cautioned to charge the witch-woman with nothing, merely to describe the cow's defection and entreat Nan's aid. Also she was to mention what store Mrs. Thorn set by Nan. Wilda related these matters obediently and took her seat on a fallen log watching the witch-woman as she hobbled to a thorn-bush that grew beside the lean-to cabin. The witch-woman spread out her claw-like hands, mumbling over the thorn-bush.

She must have been very old, Wilda felt, even on the day when she had owned the devil her master. Her little face had yellowed and shriveled into a thousand wrinkles; her body was bent like a hoop. She had not ridded herself entirely of her feline disguise. It showed still in her arched back and yellow burning eyes.

The witch-woman ended her mumbling over the thorn-bush. She crouched on the ground and with her claws raked some dry twigs together and made a fire. Then she hobbled to the stoop and plucked three feathers from the breast of the young chicken. She burned these, hoarding their ashes.

Dusk seemed to come early in the ravine. The shouldering hills and dense over-hanging trees appeared to make a darkness of their own. Old Nebo, looming so close, wrapped himself in a blue-black mantle and peered down on the witch-woman. Presently the only light in the hollow was the witch-woman's fire and all that Wilda could see by that light was the witch-woman's crouching shoulders and beak-like nose.

At last Nan came forward bringing the hoarded ashes wrapped in a bit of cloth.

"Mix hit in the caow's feed," she rasped, her yellow eyes burning in the dark; and Wilda, fearful lest the black cat of Joel's encounter be about to take shape before her, whispered her thanks and fled, her heart pounding in her throat. Far down the ravine she paused to thrust the potion in her pocket and look back. Old Nebo was quite dark. At his foot the glimmer of a candle shone in Nan's little window.

It was not night outside the hollow, but a soft colorful twilight, and as Wilda climbed again the cliff that shut off three miles of roadway she could see the after-glow of the sunset, orchid and lilac, with one star swung in it like a silver lamp. There came to her the *chough* of an automobile rounding the curve of the mountain. The echo shot back from the twilight-filled gorges husky as an ogre's whisper. Wilda stood where she was, waiting till the car should pass, for the road was narrow where the path came in.

She listened and presently heard no sound. She went down into the roadway and hurrying on was aware of a soft purring behind her. She drew back against the mountain. A gray-blue racer rounded the curve, slackened its speed. The lights flashed on, revealing more clearly the slim waiting figure, pressed back against the boulder. The car stopped abruptly and Phil Hoxie's voice cried,

"Wilda! . . . Where are you going?"

"Home," she said.

"I thought you were a ghost. I might have run over you. Get in."

She hesitated but a second. This was not Little Glory. No one had a right to touch him here, even should they see him. For the first time in her life she climbed into an automobile. The seat was very low and soft. She felt strangely safe in the darkness beside him. His presence as he guided the car seemed a powerful thing. Even on Little Glory they could hardly feel afraid with this flying thing beneath them.

"Were you frightened?" asked Phil, reaching out a hand to lay on hers, and as she did not answer, "I so seldom meet any one coming from Cuthbert. If I hadn't flashed on my lamps at that instant I might not have seen you. You ought not to walk in the mountains when it's so near dark. Where have you been?"

"Over to the ravine."

"You shouldn't walk so far. When you want to go to places like that telephone me from Wunderschoen and I'll drive you there."

He stopped short. He had resolved to see no more of Wilda. He lifted his hand from hers, steering carefully as they made their way toward Colfax Valley.

"I wish I had seen you earlier," he said presently, feeling that since they had met by accident he had hardly been false to his resolve. "Now we've had only a little ride. Can't I drive you out Lafayette Pike, Wilda?"

He felt her hesitate.

"No," she said. "I'm late. I have to get home."

"Go home then—and come back. I'll wait for you here in the valley. It'll be dark by then. Nobody will see you."

"Ben would know—some way or other. I have to be where I can hear when they call me."

"It's the last time I shall ever see you, Wilda," said Phil after a silence. "I shouldn't have seen you tonight if it hadn't been for meeting you in the road there. Isn't there some place you can meet me—just for a little while?"

He glanced at her where she sat silent, sensed the fear that struggled with her wish to yield.

"The spring-house," she answered at length. "You know —where it is?"

He knew—between her house and Felsinger's.

"Ben wouldn't think—of lookin' there; if you can make the trip up the cliff without his seein' you."

"I can manage," answered Phil, pressing her hand.

"Then I better get out now," she said. "And you put out the lights and wait here a while. He musn't know you're anywheres about."

"What a cautious little mind you have!" smiled Phil as he stopped the car for her. "Now don't forget. I'll give you time to get home and then I'll be waiting in the spring-house."

She would not forget. At the edge of the valley she looked back to see if he was obeying her. The mountain curve still hid the racer.

She fled across the valley and up the steps of Little Glory where, as always, Felsinger's light shone to guide any traveler who might pass that way. In Felsinger's kitchen was also a light. She looked at the cabin door, hesitated.

Felsinger preparing his supper thought he heard some one moving in the living room. He listened for a moment, then

went to the door. His light was out. Looking into the dusk he saw Wilda Thorn's light figure flying beneath the cherry trees.

Phil found the path quite dark when he came up later. Nevertheless he had the feeling that some one watched him as he crossed Felsinger's yard and passed through the pines to the spring-house. It was darker still in the spring-house. The moon, he remembered, would not rise for an hour. There was stillness except for the soft gurgle of the spring. Presently Wilda came to him through the dark. He could not see her come for at her mother's biding she had changed her light dress for the dark one she wore about the house. The magic potion she had received from Nan was in the pocket of that other dress. She had forgotten all about it.

Phil's hands went out, encountered hers. With that touch in the dark he drew her against him, folded her in his arms, and though she resisted him for an instant, his kiss fell on her forehead, her eyelids. He released her then and she leaned against the wall of the spring-house, covering her face in the dark.

"It's right that I should go," whispered Phil. "It's right that I shouldn't see you any more. Isn't it, Wilda?"

She nodded in the darkness, thinking of Kadis, but he did not see her. He laid an arm about her.

"What is it, Wilda? . . . Why are you trembling?"

She answered after a silence, "I am afraid."

"There's nothing to fear. No one saw me come. Sit down here on the step with me—and don't be afraid."

But Wilda's fear was vague and unfamiliar. It was an awareness of something intangible, elemental already beside

them. Nevertheless, she let Phil guide her to the door of the spring-house and they sat down on the step, his arm still about her, the presence she had felt seeming to envelop them, making her strangely less afraid.

Phil pressed her head against his shoulder.

"Dear little Wilda," he whispered. "Dear little girl . . . It's strange but I feel as if we'd been together like this somewhere, ages and ages ago . . ."

"I always felt like—I was—used to you," she said.

Then they both sat very still, neither moving nor speaking, till finally Phil's whisper came again.

"You won't forget me, Wilda? . . . You'll remember me—a little?"

Her head pressed more closely against his shoulder. She nodded, covering her eyes.

"That is something," he said. "I don't know why things are—as they are, nor whether it's strength or weakness that makes a man—chuck things. But—I shan't forget either. I shan't forget tonight—or the time we went nutting in the valley—or any of the little times we've been together. . . . I wonder what will become of you, Wilda."

She did not answer. A sound had reached her wood-trained ears, the sound of some one moving among the pines. She straightened in his embrace, peering through the dark.

"It's Ben," she said. "He's going to Mr. Felsinger's to look for me." She rose.

"Why does he go to Felsinger's to look for you?" asked Phil, rising too, seizing her hands, looking down on her face in the dark.

"I told 'em I was going there to explain about the milk. . . . I must go now—he might come here next."

But Phil held her by her hands. He bent above her lifted face and kissed her on the mouth.

With that kiss he caught her against him, held her there.

Suddenly she started in his arms, clung to him. Ben's voice was calling her name from near Felsinger's house.

"Answer him," said Phil.

She turned from him as if to obey, but her hand moved to her throat instead.

"I can't," she half sobbed. "You must go."

"Kiss me again, Wilda."

When he released her she stood very still, covering her face. She could not tell him to go now, but at last she heard him turn from her, heard him go down the step. She did not look after him into the dark. Instead, she dropped on her knees, striving to press back the sobs with her clenched hand. Then all at once the remembrance that Ben must be kept near the house brought her to her feet and sent her flying through the dark.

XII

The incline was still dark when Phil reached it. Half-way down the steps he stopped short as the figure of a man grew distinct amid the shadows at the foot. Almost instantly a small hand-flash made a ring of light before him, showing the face of Jerry Felsinger.

"Lost something?" enquired Phil shortly.

"I was not certain it was you," Felsinger replied. "May I speak with you a minute?"

Phil said nothing. He was annoyed to have been waylaid in this fashion, annoyed with any interruption in his present mood. He came down the steps to where Felsinger stood.

"It's just that Ben Cotrell knows you're on the mountain," said Felsinger, speaking softly. "How he knows it I can't tell you, but he came to my house looking for you. It's not the first time—"

"Is that so?" broke in Phil. "Then you keep tab of my movements."

"It's not the first time," repeated Felsinger, "that Cotrell has been to my place looking for you. The man has a double motive in hunting you down."

"I suppose," said Phil, "that a double motive may also be ascribed to you."

"I am sorry." Felsinger stepped from his path. "I know that your people rate Cotrell a coward. It is not the brave man that one need fear."

"Thanks for the warning," answered Phil. "It may interest you to know that I shan't be up on the mountain any more. You might tell Cotrell. It will save him trouble. And you, too, will be able to take the light out of your window for good."

Felsinger's fist contracted in the dark. Phil waited as if for his answer—Phil was not one to strike and run—then as the silence grew, flung himself down the last step and toward Colfax Valley.

Dinner was over when he reached home. He did not regret this, caring very little to talk with any one or to sit even for a while under his father's eye. He knew that later he must see his father and discuss with him the situation in

the mines. Rumors of an impending strike had taken Phil to Cuthbert and while these were quieted there were indications that feeling still worked underground. But Phil did not wish to talk of these things now.

Letty the house-girl who always waited at dinner stood beside him as he ate alone, but Letty was not enough. Old Aunt Dilsey crept out from the kitchen to hover about his chair, complaining because things had been "spiled in de warmin' and de waitin'," and to bring him a bit of gumbo she had made specially for him.

"I 'membered how you admires gumbo, Mist' Phil. I sho did."

From the windows that opened on the veranda there came to him the sound of voices, Kadis' and his aunt's, with Coral Valentine's drawling prattle dropping over all as blithe and monotonous as the song of a cicada. Once he thought he heard an unfamiliar feminine tone but did not strive to account for it. His father was probably out there too and it occurred to Phil presently that he would better see him now and have it over.

Judge Hoxie was not on the veranda. As Phil appeared in the door, Coral's voice called to him from the depths of the hammock, while Mrs. Leigh introduced him to a Miss Seftone whom the light from the dining-room window revealed as a robust young woman with beautifully marcelled hair.

"Ellen blew in unexpectedly," explained Coral. "She's on her way back from New York where she's been trousseau buying—only that's a secret. Nobody's to know she's done for. Phil, have you got that hoplite costume yet?"

Phil on such sudden summons did not remember. Could Miss Seftone be desirous of adding it to her trousseau?

"That thing you wore at Lou Attie's cotillion," Coral reminded him. "I know you've got it unless Kadis has given it to some shivering mountaineer."

It appeared that they were giving a party for Miss Seftone. Here she was on Coral's hands just as Coral had been expecting to leave, and as Coral said, the child ought really to have a little fling before she settled down for good and all, the little fling, meaning, it developed, something too big to be given in Coral's meager domicile, something that would set the social ball whirling in Miss Seftone's behalf.

"Something like the things we used to have before the war," Coral had added sighing. "Something that will take us back—if only for a little while."

"Were we all so very happy before the war?" asked Kadis.

But Mrs. Leigh had sympathized with Coral. She would not allow Coral to give her party at the country club; it must be given at Roslyn. Indeed, she herself would very much like to entertain for Miss Seftone.

The postponement of Kadis' wedding had left Mrs. Leigh empty handed. The gardens were never so lovely as they were in June with the wistaria in bloom all over the summer house.

Coral accepted the offer prettily, but she wanted the party at night because it was to be a mask ball. What, however, could be lovelier than Roslyn at night—with Chinese lanterns swung from every arbor and tree?

The hoplite costume was for some one who would be sure to say that he couldn't come because he hadn't anything to

wear. Phil thought he had the hoplite costume; it couldn't possibly keep anybody warm. He said a few words to Miss Seftone and went inside to see his father.

Next day Kadis found the hoplite suit tucked away in a cedar chest. The sight of it brought back the Morse cotillion when she had nearly danced her slippers off, for those had been the days when khaki was abroad in the land and everybody had moved in a sort of reckless fever. She looked the suit over, darned a tiny run in the tights, polished the sword-hilt and helmet, something of the old interest waking in her again. She began to plan her own costume—and Phil's. She would have Letty help her and make them herself.

She carried the hoplite suit up Little Glory, and though Felsinger met her when she passed the cabin and walked with her to the school, she did not mention the dance until they parted that afternoon. She had now come to bring up dangerous subjects only as they separated. She made her invitation very brief and when he stood silent she added,

"This is really a favor. Coral's party wasn't. You don't need to dance," for she saw that his hesitation had a new color; he seemed more regretful than obstinate.

"And I've brought you a costume." This was the final plea. He frowned, staring at her.

"A costume?"

She nodded.

"It's fancy dress. I knew you wouldn't have time to order something. It's to be Monday night and this is Friday. We're all having to rush."

She took the parcel from her saddle-bag and unwrapped it, shaking out the bright tunic, displaying the newly polished sword and helmet as if she were trying to allure a child.

"It was Phil's," she explained. "You're about of a height."

His face clouded and she added easily,

"Don't come if you don't want to. I don't like to seem a nuisance."

"I want to," he said at once. "If you knew how devilishly lonely I get—" He broke off, adding, "What are you going to be?"

"I haven't decided. Won't you suggest something?"

"Portia," looking at her thoughtfully. "No—Rosalind. But do you know whom I thought of when I saw you first? '*La belle dame sans merci.*' "

"Thanks," said Kadis, "but I don't think I'll go as a disease. She *was* Keats' malady, wasn't she?"

"She was a beautiful woman on a white horse," he answered impatiently. "I hate symbolism. Go as Jeanne d'Arc. That suits you."

"It doesn't need to suit," she said. "We wear masks." And as she made ready to leave, "Keep the costume," she added, "in case you decide to come."

He walked with her to the incline and when they parted he said,

"If you see me there give me a sign so that I may know you."

"If you don't know me without it," she answered, perverse in her turn, "you don't deserve a sign."

And she told herself as she rode down Lafayette Pike that she didn't care whether he came or not.

The dowagers sat along the wall in Roslyn's great double parlors where the dancers moved, Pierrots and Pierrettes, Carmencita, Paul Revere, Harlequin, Mephisto—the dowagers had convictions regarding them all.

"That's Rann Murdock, that Mephisto," Mrs. Hatch was confiding to Major Coberton, a neatly whiskered old gentleman with a fishy eye and a nervous monocle. Major Coberton, like the dowagers, was unmasked and he explained on enquiry that he was dressed to impersonate Sir Walter Raleigh.

"Queen Elizabeth is around here some where," Mrs. Hatch rumbled coyly. "Yonder—sitting near the musicians. It's Lou Attie Morse, I think."

Mrs. Hatch herself was in sky-blue tulle.

"Ariel," she croaked.

Major Coberton's eye moved to the piano and back among the dancers. He was looking for some one but it was not Queen Elizabeth. Now and then he fixed his monocle and stared toward the library. They would begin to serve punch there a little later, he understood. He speculated somewhat anxiously concerning the punch.

His monocle returned, fixed on one of the dancers.

"Who is that Puck?" he asked eagerly.

"That's Marion," answered Mr. Hatch. "She's Peter Pan. I thought it a little extreme but she's so slight and boyish—like Coral Valentine. By the way, have you seen Coral? . . . Oh, they're beginning to serve the punch."

The Major half turned toward the library, then he turned back.

"Which *is* Mrs. Valentine?" he asked.

"That's what I wanted to know. I can't decide."

With a flowing gesture she accepted the Major's arm and they went toward the library. Mrs. Leigh in a Colonial dress of flowered silk, her hair powdered, stood near the front door welcoming a late comer.

"That must be Phil Hoxie," whispered Mrs. Hatch as they passed. "I remember that hoplite suit. He thinks he'll fool us coming in that way. Look! . . . Cinderella is trying to vamp him, as Marion says. Ah! . . . Do you know who I think Cinderella is?"

The hoplite moved down the hall and stood an instant by the ball room door. Peter Pan was waltzing with Napoleon. Portia—surely that was Portia in the bright red cloak—Portia was in the arms of Washington. . . . It might be Portia, but it was not Kadis. The lady in white yonder with roses in her hair talking with Queen Elizabeth . . .

Mephisto appeared, seized the lady and bore her into the dance.

"Persephone, perhaps," mused the hoplite, seeing Pluto's way with her.

He smiled, delaying until the lady had whirled past him in the dance. His eyes met hers under her mask . . .

He moved on down the hall, through the open doors of the veranda and out into the gardens. Here the night had broken into a luminous blossoming of vari-colored lanterns. Their light threw into a deeper shadow the nooks and arbors

from which now and then a laugh or murmur betrayed the retreat of some dance-weary pair.

The hoplite strolled on, taking the path where the rainbow of petunias still marked the spot of Lafayette's departure. By the light of the lanterns he could see that the red rose was in bloom. Clouds of white that took on a lilac glow from some near-by lantern gave out an eerie fragrance. A soft whisper came to him from behind them.

He drew back in the shadow to let Cinderella pass on the arm of Pierrot. The hoplite had been speaking with his hostess a moment before when her glance had fallen on Cinderella—Cinderella dancing, her bare white knees peeping now and then through her tatters. A little flush had crept up his hostess' cheek and she had become wandering in her remarks.

The hoplite watched Cinderella as she tripped with Pierrot toward the summer house. He would have sworn she was Mrs. Valentine had he not been certain that Mrs. Valentine had left town. He drew a cigar from his tunic, lighted it, passed down the path and stood by the turf steps where Kadis had shown him the lily pool. Portia passed him with Washington. Her cloak moved like a dim flame under the lanterns.

The hoplite sat down on the bench by the pool, turned so that he could watch the path. Almost at once he started as something light approached him, but he settled back again.

It was an unmasked lady in light blue billows. She clung to the arm of an Elizabethan gentleman who spoke agitatedly.

"For three generations I have attended balls in this house and never before have I been asked to drink an excuse. I remember well the third Graham Hoxie. What a man! What a cellar!"

"I think she went this way," rumbled the blue billows, leaving the hoplite somewhat confused.

Mephisto passed him with Undine on his arm.

"It's a fact," Mephisto was protesting. "The very first time I saw you—"

The hoplite smiled as if at a random measure from some familiar song. His eyes moved to the pool where was mirrored one rosy lantern swung from a marten box. Then abruptly he turned, looked down the path and, rising, threw away his cigar.

A masked lady was coming down the path alone. She wore white and there were roses in her hair. She came slowly and once she stopped as if listening. When she passed the turf steps the hoplite spoke from the shadow and she started, her fingers moving to her mask.

"Did you think I wouldn't know you?" asked the hoplite.

She stood silent as if challenging him to speak her name.

"Miss Leigh," he responded softly. "Otherwise—Persephone."

She shook her head but her soft laughter rewarded him and she let him guide her down the turf steps and sat with him on the bench.

"Not Persephone," she said. "I'm my great-great-Aunt Judith—as I can prove by her portrait."

"Tell me about your great-great-Aunt Judith," demanded the hoplite. "Does she suit you as well as Rosalind? Was she a '*belle dame sans merci*?' "

"How curious that you should ask me that," she said, taking off her mask to smile at him in the lantern light. "Talk very low. Here comes Punchinello looking for me and I want him to dance this with Undine."

They sat still until Punchinello had gone by.

"And was your great-great-Aunt Judith a lovable lady who couldn't love?" enquired the hoplite then.

She looked at him an instant, then her eyes fell and presently she replaced her mask.

"She was a fortunate lady, I think. She had an array of suitors that has made all us grand nieces open our eyes or hang our heads, according to our temperaments. So you see she must have been lovable. But she laughed at them all. Then one day there came from a far country an underling in a great man's train. History records nothing about him except that he was dark, that he composed a song in her honor and sang it to her with his 'golden voice'—and that she turned from all the rest to him. So it is possible that she could love."

"And so she married the underling."

"Oh no! She merely loved him. Her fate was not a happy one. I never look at her portrait that I don't hear that echo, 'Her fate was not a happy one.' How do they know? Mightn't she have been happier just Judith than married to some great man with the memory of that 'golden voice' always in her heart—or even living with her dark person in his far country? Anyhow, I like her courage and I've always felt I'd have done—just that."

"And the underling," said the hoplite. "Had he no courage?"

"Perhaps; courage just to go on living.—Never mind. Have *you* no courage, oh hoplite? Is it courage that keeps you smoking in the garden?"

"No, taste. I really feel like a hoplite, remote from all these personages that throng your house, more antiquated than any of them. Surely you have no one present who antedates the fifth century, B. C."

"Not unless it's Mephisto. You may sit here if you want to, though of course I'd like you to meet people and to dance a little with me—and with others, Undine for instance, who is the honorée, though Phil—Punchinello, I should say—is looking out for her. How can you write truly of people if you love them so little?"

"Just as you say," answered the hoplite obligingly. He adjusted his mask and rose with her.

"Of course I can't call any names," she said as they went toward the house. "I can only say, 'Hoplite, this is Queen Elizabeth,' and so on. But it will all be the same to you. Let's have some punch first."

In the library the Elizabethan gentleman was bending his monocle upon the punch bowl as though striving to discern if any change had taken place in that beverage since he last examined it. He did not report the result of his observation for Judge Hoxie, in the rôle of himself, stood not far away, quizzing Mephisto who with Undine, was drinking uncritically enough. Major Coberton filled a glass for Cinderella beside him but did not undertake another himself.

Kadis presented the hoplite to Undine. Undine had this dance. Kadis presented the hoplite to Cinderella. Cinderella had this dance. "Try me again," she whispered.

Major Coberton monocled his eye and inspected the hoplite with the same disapproval he had brought to bear on the punch. Kadis bore her charge from the room and into the masked and gorgeous presence of Queen Elizabeth. Queen Elizabeth had this dance. She would give him the next one. Kadis had it, too, but she ordered an extra from the musicians and danced it with the hoplite herself.

"Tell me where you learned," whispered Kadis, not blind to the glances that followed them as they moved about the floor; the hoplite's tall figure was not one that the eyes of either men or women missed.

"Tell me where and when you learned," persisted Kadis, as he did not answer her.

"Back in Athens," said the hoplite. "Just before the burning of Sardis."

His eyes smiled down at her through his mask.

"Will you see me somewhere a little later?" he added. "All by yourself? . . . There's something I want to tell you."

And as they passed the musicians, booming the extra's final chord, Kadis whispered back,

"In the summer house. Meet me there when you hear them playing *The Blue Danube.*"

She surrendered him then to the waiting embrace of Queen Elizabeth and went to find Punchinello whom she had seen watching them from the hall. But Punchinello was gone. He had passed in his gaily spotted garb out into the lanternlit dark and was sitting now in the blackest spot he could find, reflecting that this was the second time this evening Kadis had served him so, for Punchinello was un-

aware that it was not his dance but an extra that Kadis had given to the hoplite.

First she had sent him to pay his court to Undine, Undine being the guest of honor and he the host. Punchinello did not care to take charge of Undine. For one thing he disliked women with marcelled hair. For another, why should he interfere with Mephisto who had volunteered so cheerfully for the place?

And now Kadis had cast him by again—merrily as one flings away a ball when one has done playing. She had cast him by and for the same engaging toy, it seemed, for Punchinello had not missed seeing Kadis and the hoplite under the lantern by the pool. He had passed them in silence and had found Undine, had taken her from Mephisto and danced with her obediently—he the clown at her party. Yes, Kadis had dressed him as a clown.

Had she not been right? What was he but a clown—Kadis' clown? What was he but a familiar toy she possessed and played with when she had the mind? And this Felsinger—what was he doing here? Hadn't a slap in the face been enough? Wasn't the man satisfied to be hated on a single count?

Punchinello started. A little shriek had sounded from behind the hollyhocks. And now, almost before he was aware, the darkness around him became softly luminous and there swayed before his eyes a lantern depending from a slender pole. He turned—looked up.

Cinderella stood behind him. She had been dangling her lantern into every shadow she passed, tormenting the lovers

in their retreats. She laid a masked cheek on Punchinello's head and lightly patted his ear.

" 'Poor Punchinello!' " she half sang, half whispered.

Punchinello laughed huskily, his hand going up to meet hers.

"Didn't your sweetheart come?" she whispered. "Who was she? . . . Columbine! . . . Didn't she come?"

He said nothing and she swung her lantern pole across her shoulder and stepped into the path where Harlequin waited for her. Their song drifted back to him.

" 'Punchi- Punchi- Punchinello!
P-o-o-r Punchinello!' "

The hoplite was coming out on the veranda with Queen Elizabeth as Harlequin and Cinderella approached.

"Ours," said Cinderella to the hoplite, surrendering her lantern to Harlequin and Harlequin to Queen Elizabeth.

Cinderella's tatters, the hoplite observed, were as effective as anything thereabout. Her bare feet were protected by apochryphal ballet slippers of faded satin. The curls that hung about her shoulders were as black as her mask.

"Hide me somewhere quick!" she whispered as they started off together. "I've got this next with Major Coberton, and I'm afraid he's seen me."

The hoplite knew the garden well by night. He led her by way of the hollyhocks to the summer house. About its door yellow lanterns hung like moons amid the wistaria. Cinderella caught the hoplite's hand and drew him into the recess beyond the lantern rays. They sat down on the bench

that followed the circle of the latticed wall. Cinderella sat very still as if listening. Presently she whispered,

"You make a wonderful hoplite. . . . Do you know me?"

The hoplite knew her. As she darted before him into the summer house the lantern light had shown him a gleam of cropped gold through a rift in the black curls. But he had no time to answer her. A be-ruffed figure had dawned under the lanterns in the doorway.

"My dear Cinderella," came the admonishing tones of Sir Walter Raleigh, "this is our dance." And as he fixed his monocle and found her,

" 'Escape me? Never, beloved.' "

The hoplite watched them go, smiling to himself. Suddenly his tall figure straightened. He turned, listening. The music of *The Blue Danube* was floating through the open doors of the veranda and out upon the garden. And now as the strollers began to move toward the house, the Lady Judith in her white dress came down the veranda steps and along the path by the hollyhocks.

"Did I keep you waiting?" she asked a little breathlessly, finding him standing in the door of the summer house.

The hoplite took her hand and guiding her up the step drew her into the shadowy recess as Cinderella had drawn him.

"Now what did you have to tell me?" asked the Lady Judith.

"Something very wonderful," he replied. "Something that happened after you left me today. But first—first you must know that 'Ma Jeanette' has come back for—I think —the seventh time."

"It is because she is so sad," the lady answered. "We must have happy endings over here."

"Of course. But I can't build a mausoleum and put a pink pagoda on top of it. I shall not change 'Ma Jeanette.' But what I had to tell you was something good. I've sold a little sea yarn—a jolly thing, not a mausoleum. I had a letter from *Holt's* this afternoon. They want me to do a serial."

The Lady Judith drew a sudden breath. She reached out in the dark and touched his hand.

"I knew you'd be glad," he said in a low voice, prisoning her fingers, releasing them.

"I am—so glad."

But her voice lost its brightness as she added, "Of course I know what that means."

"My resignation from Little Glory School. Shall you care?"

"Shall I care! . . . Shall we all care? . . . I am just wondering how I shall tell them. I am just trying to think—what we shall do."

"I feel a cad," he said abruptly. "I hadn't thought—of your side of it, and that's the truth. Here I sought the place myself, used it while I needed it, started things you can't carry on alone—and now I fling it by at the first chance of something more to my mind. . . . Of couse I'll stay on until you get some one."

"That may take years," Kadis answered ruefully.

"Then I'll stay years."

"No. You must do your work. The school is not your work. It was just something you touched while you were

groping perhaps. I knew you couldn't do both. Or rather I should have known, if I had stopped to think."

"I know people who might help you," he said suddenly. "Chaps out of work who'd be glad of a chance."

She turned to him.

"Some one who would really stay—for the little we pay? Some one who would take the school when I give it up?"

"When you give it up? But you won't do that."

"Yes—I shall. The people you speak of—will you write them?"

He spoke after a silence.

"I am out of touch with them. Surely there is some one here—"

Kadis rose, her hand moving to his with a fleet, forgiving touch.

"The music has stopped. I must run back. . . . Don't worry about us. We shall get on."

She turned in the door.

"You are to sit by me at supper," she added. "That's after the next number. I'll be waiting for you at the veranda door."

And she flew away, passing Undine and Napoleon with a little wave of the hand.

Undine and Napoleon turned in at the summer house.

"But you must go," said Undine, "and find your partner when the music starts again."

She spread her skirts of seaweed and green silk, sinking into the nook by the door. The hoplite had drawn back into the shadow. Something in the notes of Undine's voice appeared to have arrested him there.

Napoleon was murmuring solicitously.

"It's nothing," Undine assured him. "I often get warm when I dance."

And she took off her mask disclosing the comely features of Miss Ellen Seftone.

"Nothing at all," she repeated, lifting her face as if to feel the air upon it. "There's the music! . . . Run along, and if you see a pink domino running around tell it I'm here."

"But I can't—Ah!"

Napoleon had turned about.

"Isn't that some one—"

The hoplite rose.

"Oh!" cried Miss Seftone. "The Greek soldier. I'm quite safe," nodding to Napoleon, and as Napoleon made his adieux, "I wondered what had become of you. Do sit down."

The hoplite sat down. Miss Seftone fanned herself with her mask.

"Isn't it wonderful tonight?" she remarked, lifting her voice a little. The hoplite, for all his physical perfection, appeared to be a little deaf.

"I love your nights," she added shrilly. "I love your old, old houses and your leisurely way of doing things. With us every thing is so new and hurrying. . . . I hope our hostess doesn't catch me without my mask. We all unmask at supper any way."

The hoplite heard that. He turned and looked at Miss Seftone but he said nothing. Instead, he rose and stood silent. A pink domino had appeared in the door.

Miss Seftone replaced her mask, nodded to the hoplite. The domino begged pardon. The hoplite bowed to them both.

"Thank heaven you came!" whispered Miss Seftone as they hurried away. "He's so dull he's—uncanny."

They stopped at the veranda steps and faced each other laughing. The music had stopped. It had been a short dance.

"Oh, well—supper!" said Miss Seftone.

The hoplite stood very still in the shadows of the summer house. After a while he lifted his face and looked toward the veranda, deserted now except for the Lady Judith waiting in the door.

The hoplite closed his eyes an instant, then he turned. Slowly he went down the drive and out the gate.

XIII

Phil was silent when Kadis told him of Felsinger's decision regarding Little Glory School. She had waited until Wednesday evening to inform him of this sudden change of prospect, wanting herself time to think it over. They had the library to themselves, Judge Hoxie and his sister having betaken themselves to a vesper service at the church.

"What does it mean?" Phil finally asked.

"I can't give up Little Glory School," said Kadis in a low voice.

She had known some burning moments in the last two days, moments when she had come to grappling quarters

with rather large questions. She had never thought of Little Glory as a career, though Judge Hoxie persisted in alluding to it as such. To Kadis it was her work. She had not chosen it so much as it had chosen her. There had been no one else to take it and Miss Miles, whom Kadis had helped so often in the summer, had handed it over to her as a sort of legacy. Kadis loved it now as well as Miss Miles had loved it, perhaps better. It was as if she had adopted a child and now that it seemed her own, must give it back—no, not give it back—abandon it, watch it die. What right had people, any people, to require this of her?

It seemed a little thing to ask of marriage that she have her work on the side. She had never felt secure in leaving it to Felsinger. How could she abandon it now without even so much as a hireling shepherd?

Phil replied to his own question.

"It means that you will never marry me."

She faced him.

"It is you who say that, Phil—not I."

"Is there anything," asked Phil, "that you love as you love Little Glory?"

She considered this for a moment, then she said,

"Yes. Roslyn."

Phil moved over to the window, stood with his back to her. Presently he said,

"You want to put it off again till you find somebody else?"

"That may happen at any time," she answered.

"Again," said Phil, "it may take years."

Her own words to Felsinger.

"I know. I'm as tired of all this as you are. But don't say I don't mean to marry you, Phil. That hurt, you know."

"I didn't say you didn't mean to. I said you never would. Your intentions may be the best in the world. But centuries, as it happens, are made up of weeks and months. People don't live for centuries."

"Of course not." Kadis found herself growing angry as she talked with Phil's back. "If you had to give up your work when you married me," she added, "there'd be some postponing on your own part. You can't shuffle off a school as if it were a pair of shoes."

"That's true. But suppose you find some one to take over your work and they give it up—afterwards?"

Phil had turned about now.

"You see," he added, as Kadis did not answer, "the school situation is not cured merely by postponing our marriage. It may come up any time."

"I ought not to have to give it up. It isn't right."

"I've nothing to do with that. It was you who promised that you would give it up when we married. That was three years ago."

"It was the only way I could get mother to let me take it. I could have given it up more easily a month after I made the promise than I could give it up now."

"I'm not finding fault with your promise," answered Phil. "I can't release you from it—that's all. Aunt Adelaide will have to do that. She knows how I feel about it. So does my father. I feel sure if I paid enough I could get some one to come, some teacher from a distance."

"That's bribery, Phil. People who will come only for their own price are not the people to do the work. There's only one way; some one with love enough to build a mission school; teachers with love enough to teach. The teachers should be paid, but it should not be the salary that draws them here. People who serve in the mountains must have more love to give than those who serve in the city slums."

"Then I will build a mission school," said Phil.

She looked at him a light dawning in her blue eyes. Then she answered,

"Uncle Graham would never let you."

"I hardly have to ask my father's permission now," said Phil, lifting his head.

"But if he objected—" ventured Kadis who knew how short-lived was Phil's independence in the presence of his father. Of course they could build it without her uncle's knowledge, that is, they might get it so far underway that it would be too late for him to interfere. This was perhaps what Phil meant.

"But it would mean supervision," said Kadis. "You haven't time for that, Phil—even if you could go on the mountain. Supervision during the building—and afterwards."

Phil said nothing. It was true that he had about all one young man could do.

"And how could I see my dream being accomplished—and not take a hand in it? You couldn't expect it of me."

Kadis rose as she spoke.

"It's uncle," she added quietly, "more than mother. He could persuade her to let me go on with it. Why can't

he see that the work he and I are doing in the mountains is virtually the same? We're just beginning at different ends. He's trying to wipe out the stills and I'm trying to wipe out ignorance. He's fighting a symptom and I'm fighting the source."

"I think he's afraid for you," answered Phil. "I think they both feel that when you bear the name of Hoxie the danger will be worse. We know they are wrong, of course, but we can't blame them."

"It's just a dead-lock," said Kadis.

After her talk with Phil she found it the more difficult to put the case before her mother. She delayed, hoping vaguely that Felsinger might get in touch with his friends and find some one to take his place. She still saw him daily for he had insisted on finishing his month at the school, but he gave her no basis for this hope. At the end of a fortnight she had told her mother what she had told Phil, and Mrs. Leigh had received the news with a tranquility that mystified her daughter.

It had been a two weeks of unparalleled gayety in Innessburg. Miss Seftone, delaying her departure for home until what must have been the very eve of her wedding, had undoubtedly experienced her "fling." Rann Murdock, the Mephisto of the Leigh ball, entertained Miss Seftone with a dinner-dance at the country club. Mrs. Hatch offered a morning bridge which developed into a moonlight picnic without a moon. Lou Attie gave a luncheon and Major Coberton, a hunt, calling out his red and white pack and opening his rambling old house to the most convivial break-

fast that anybody had attended since the Armistice. Everybody entertained except the Langs.

Coral saw to it that Felsinger was invited to everything, although the honored guest at these functions had remarked that the mountaineer was the slowest man she had ever met.

"That night at the Hoxies' I ran into him in the summer house—and he simply sat. There was something about him that made me feel—that made me feel inside—I can't describe it."

"I don't see how he was slow," said Coral, "if he made you feel like that."

Coral was not piqued that Felsinger had failed to call. She was certain that he supposed her gone. She had meant to reveal herself at the masquerade but that donkey of a Major Coberton had frustrated her; and then at supper Felsinger was gone. She was determined to see something of him before she left with Ellen for the West.

The invitations she secured for Felsinger were entrusted to Kadis or to the mails. Felsinger declined them with a marked impartiality. He had given Kadis no reason for having left her dance without so much as a good-night, and Kadis had asked for none. It was merely an accession of shyness, she told herself, and his manner had somehow conveyed an apology ever since. She was interested in his contemplated serial and she asked him to come to Roslyn some evening and read her what he had written It had been his last day at Little Glory School, and though he had offered to remain in his place until she found some one, Kadis would not listen.

"I've not got at the actual writing of it yet," he answered now. "But the story as I've worked it out—I'd like to tell you that. Could you stop by my porch tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow," she said, "I'll have to rush home and dress. There's something every afternoon and night."

"Why doesn't Innessburg save something for the future?" he enquired.

"Why doesn't Miss Seftone go home?" demanded Kadis. "Nobody expects Innessburg to be rational after her long war-nap. But a girl on the way to be married ought not to dally so."

She stopped, flushing a little, realizing that she was not taking an undeviating path to the altar herself.

Felsinger was gazing past her into the gap of the hills.

"Is Miss Seftone to be married?" he asked.

She recalled that this prospect was a secret in Innessburg and answered that she believed so—some day, of course; Miss Seftone had a great many suitors. It occurred to her then that this was the night of Mrs. Hatch's picnic and that Phil had not desired to go; Phil had attended very few of the parties given for Miss Seftone. They would both stay home tonight, she said to Felsinger, and he should come and tell his story.

Felsinger's eyes came back from the gap amid the hills. He would come. Was she so kind to everybody?

At dinner Kadis found her uncle preoccupied, silent. She wondered if there were brewing more trouble in the mines. Yet Phil seemed more cheerful than was his wont. Noting her summery toilette, he asked if she had decided to go to the picnic after all.

"Think I'll run out for a minute or two myself," he said.

"Kadis, dear," remarked Mrs. Leigh, "I wish you would go too. There are to be so many more men than girls; Mrs. Hatch phoned me today. She was thinking of changing it to some sort of athletic contest."

"Too many men make it nice," said Kadis.

"Not for the men, surely," remonstrated her mother.

"Well," chimed in Phil, "the party's not for the men. It's for Miss Seftone and the more martyrs among us, the better."

Judge Hoxie rose.

"May I see you in the library?" he said to Phil.

Phil whitened. He stood for an instant behind his chair as if summoning his forces. Then he followed his father.

Judge Hoxie stood in the center of the room, an unfolded letter in his hand. With a motion of the head he bade Phil shut the door.

"Were you on the mountain last night?" he asked then.

Phil looked at him without replying.

"Jasper gave me this," said Judge Hoxie. "He found it in the car."

He thrust the letter toward Phil and Phil read in a loose scrawl,

"Thers 20 guns on Little Glory primed fer evry Hoxie hart. Cum agin."

"I was there for a while," said Phil after a pause.

"But why?"

"Felsinger—just for a minute or so."

"But why Felsinger? Why go there even for a minute? Do you consider such bravado anything but absurd? You

Miss Seftone replaced her mask, nodded to the hoplite. The domino begged pardon. The hoplite bowed to them both.

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Her own words to Felsinger.

"Now I can never come back," he said.

But he made no move to go looking down at Kadis where she stood in the starlight, the rapt and listening look still in her eyes.

"It is after midnight," he added in a lower voice.

"Did your fairy godmother say you must be back by midnight?" Kadis asked, then she added irrelevantly,

"Coral leaves tomorrow night. Have you been to see them?"

He answered in the same low voice,

"I call on no one except you, my critic—or, shall I say, my mentor?"

"Either one makes me dizzy," Kadis answered, wondering why it had become not easy for her to speak. "Call me the Great American Public that Knows what it Likes."

She drew from him a little, a sudden wonderful fear upon her. She laid her hand on the trellis at her side, forcing her voice to lightness.

"The red rose is in bloom," she said. "You can't see them unless you know."

He answered after a silence,

"You promised me one in June. I have not forgotten."

Her hand moved toward the roses. He made a movement as if to push them from her.

"I would rather have a white one," he said, "from you."

She turned silently to another bush, held out a flower.

He stood for an instant meeting her eyes through the veil of dark. Suddenly he took both hand and flower, folding them close.

"Kadis!" he whispered. "Kadis—dear."

She closed her eyes, feeling herself drawn closer by her prisoned hand. With the enfolding of his arms she seemed to become a part of him, to become with him a part of the night and the stars. She thought, "I live. I know now why —I live."

Yet even as she lifted her face the thought of Phil rose in her consciousness, bringing with it a painful strength. She struggled, found herself free. The world of reality came slowly back—or was that the reality, and this the dream? She met Felsinger's eyes, then leaned against the trellis closing her own.

"Please—go," she said.

He stood for a moment without moving. Then she felt him turn and the sound of his step came to her presently from the gravel of the drive. After a time she moved toward the house, making her way blindly through the dark. . . .

Phil's bedroom door stood open and the wind, coming from that side, blew his curtain out into the room. Kadis went in as she passed, lowered the windows and stood for a moment by the empty bed. The light from the hall came in, falling on the familiar, boyish belongings—the pennants, tacked at irregular angles, the disturbed appointments of the bureau, the violin case, the wardrobe door standing open . . .

The faint odor of cigarettes asserted itself now that the windows were closed, as palpable as a human presence in the room.

Kadis' hand moved to her throat. Her brain was throbbing now that she stood still. Her whole body felt vibrant,

shaken into song. What was the harp within her that had responded so readily to this strange hand? What was the thing that had come so suddenly upon her? . . .

In her own room she stood by the window, watching the rain as it drove through the dark.

It was not a sudden thing, she told herself. It was something that had stolen up behind her and walked with her for many days. Now at the sound of its voice let her face it. Let her know where it would lead her.

Felsinger loved her—and she loved him. It was not in these the danger lay. The danger lay in her strange readiness to submit her will to his.

What was his will with her? Could she go with him and live on the mountain? Could she give up Roslyn—and go there? Roslyn belonged to Phil—and Phil would marry. He was the sort of man who marries. Could she see Roslyn given over to another? Once Phil had asked her—not a month ago—if she loved anything as she loved Little Glory and she had answered "Roslyn." She had not known the test would come so soon.

Phil would suffer her to live on at Roslyn with his wife as mistress, but it would not be the same. Perhaps this man with his strange pride and his power over her would not consent to live at Roslyn, even so. Where mightn't he take her? . . . Where mightn't she consent to go? . . . Let her think while she still could think—before she saw him again.

But it was not easy to think with the memory of that moment in the garden flooding her consciousness—with this strange throbbing of brain and singing of body.

The rain lashed the panes as if striving to beat her from the window. . . . She had sent him away in the rain. . . . And the picnic—Mrs. Hatch's picnic—they would all be wet. But surely they were all at home by now—all except Phil. Why didn't Phil come home? . . .

As in the garden, the thought of Phil brought strength. She would never go with this man. It was unthinkable. She was plighted to Phil and besides—could she demolish all her world? . . . It had seemed a moment ago as if Roslyn were crumbling in little stones about her, as if it were dissolving into little stones under the rain.

She turned from the window, beginning to undress in the dark.

She had felt safe, immune, not knowing the danger that lurked within herself. Her uncle had known, had warned her through Phil—and she had not believed. This was at work within her even then and she had not believed. Thank God she believed now—in time.

Lying at last on her pillow, she breathed more freely. She would marry Phil tomorrow—if he would have her. And Little Glory—She thrust the thought from her. Little Glory was a precious thing, but too cumbersome to be carried in this flight toward safety. A way would be found for Little Glory . . .

And so, while her disordered thoughts groped and strove to arrange themselves, her unbewildered body sang and sang.

Kadis did not see Phil the next morning for Phil had not come home. She recalled that he had intended riding over

to Cuthbert that day and decided that he had gone the night before. She would see him when he returned.

Meantime she took Lafayette Pike alone for a last day with Little Glory School.

XIV

That afternoon Felsinger sat at his table talking with Wilda Thorn who stood near the door, her books under her arm. His blinds which had been closed all morning were open now and the breeze, cool after the night's rain, came in, stirring the papers by his hand. His eyes looked tired, as if he had not slept. His clothes were streaked with red clay.

"Let us understand this, Wilda," he was saying. "Who said you weren't to come here any more?"

She was silent, not looking at him.

"I think you are merely tired of the lessons," he added. "Isn't that it?"

Her eyes turned to him.

"I'm not tired. I never would get tired. I just—can't come."

"I will not press you for reasons," said Felsinger, then abruptly, "Where were you last night, Wilda?"

Again she did not answer.

"I feel responsible for you in a way," he said. "One does when one teaches, I find. Where did you go, Wilda?"

"You mustn't feel responsible for me," she answered.

"But I do. When I came home last night and found them looking for you—Ben and the men from Wunderschoen—I joined them, tramping these woods after they'd gone in—till nearly day-break."

"They found me in the kitchen," said Wilda.

"Yes, and you made them believe you had been there all night. Was that true?"

Her eyes met his, wavered and fell.

"Was it true, Wilda?"

In the silence there came a light knock at the outer door. Felsinger turned, looked out the window. A young sorrel, smartly trapped, stood in the path. He rose, opening the door.

Coral Valentine stood on the porch. She looked like a demure jockey in black riding coat and white breeches, a little tricorne pulled down on her bright hair.

"Howdy?" she enquired, throwing a backward glance at the sorrel and stepping into the room. Her round eyes moved slowly from Wilda to Felsinger and back again.

"I see you have company," she remarked.

Wilda shook her head, somewhat uncertain as to whether the visitor was a boy or girl.

"I was just goin'," she said.

And she went leaving Felsinger staring after her.

"The lady seemed about to cry," observed Coral, taking her stand in front of the empty fire-place, her feet slightly apart, her hands behind her grasping her little crop. "What a divil-with-the-women you are!"

"Won't you sit down?" asked Felsinger, putting forward a chair.

She shook her head.

"I've been sitting on Chloe all the way here. You may take a chair though, for you look as if you'd been galloping about on foot with that pink mud all over you."

Felsinger started slightly as a second knock sounded on the kitchen door.

"This must be your regular afternoon," remarked Coral.

It was Wilda who had returned for the blue Shakespeare. She didn't know how she had come to leave it.

Felsinger returning to the room, found Coral by the window.

"Looking at Chloe," she explained, and when he had found the book and withdrawn again, she turned to the table at her side and glanced quickly through the sheets of paper lying there, even at the insert in the typewriter. She was standing by the fireplace when Felsinger returned again.

"Do you know why I came?" she asked, her round eyes lifting to his.

"I can't imagine," Felsinger replied. "The cabin's rather a sight. The fact is—"

"The fact is, you'd rather I hadn't come," finished Coral as he paused. Her eyes darkened and fell. She tapped her crop against her little boot.

A relenting smile crept to Felsinger's mouth.

"Only because I'm such a sight," he answered, "and the cabin's nearly as bad. When I have lady visitors—"

"But you *had* a lady visitor—and you weren't apologizing to her."

"But I know her so well—"

"You could know me better—if you wanted to," said Coral.

Her eyes lifted, fell. It was a brief look but sufficient to disclose the film of tears.

"I don't though. I mean I don't know you—now. And you are going away."

She answered after a pause.

"You thought I'd gone, didn't you?"

And he, remembering no doubt that ladies are sometimes pleased to find themselves recognized despite a disguise, replied,

"I did until the masquerade."

"You knew me that night?" she asked.

"Oh, not at once. I knew you when we sat in the summer house."

Her head drooped again.

"And you haven't been to see me—nor Ellen! . . . No matter." She straightened her shoulders, reached into the opening of her white blouse. "We are leaving tonight on seventeen," she added. "This is really good-bye, though I didn't come only to tell you that. Do you remember this?"

And she held out the gold cigar case.

Felsinger turned instantly from her. There was on his face something of the pallor she had seen there that night at her own table.

Her hand dropped at her side and she stood gazing at him after the manner of a child whose Christmas offering has been refused by some very rude grown-up.

So he had left it on purpose. She had wondered. Sanda had found the case on the piano the morning after Felsinger dined there. She had returned it to Mrs. Valentine's drawer and Coral herself had not discovered it until today. At the moment it had seemed no more than an excuse for dropping by Felsinger's on her ride. As she rode, however, she won-

dered. But no, she would not believe—no one had ever treated her quite like that.

Felsinger moved over to the table, turned through the papers that lay there. Coral noticed that his fingers shook slightly and that once he seemed about to speak and refrained. She would say something quite preposterous—force him to tell her the truth.

"Is it that you don't—like me?" she asked. "Most men—like me."

Felsinger turned with his half smile.

"Mrs. Valentine," he said, "I left the gift because, frankly, it's too handsome a thing for me to have won from you."

"I being a struggling widow," suggested Coral, the smile and tears making a rainbow of her face. "I wish though you wouldn't call me 'Mrs. Valentine.' You make the *Mrs.* so severe. And I didn't pay anything for the cigar case. It was a present—and it's never been used. And I don't like your smile. It's—sardonic. You looked just then like the Laughing Faun."

"I'm sorry," rejoined Felsinger.

Coral held out the cigar case, still with the rainbow smile. As Felsinger made no move to take it a slow revulsion ran through her, a muscular contraction not unrelated to the impulse to coil and strike. She dropped the cigar case back into her blouse, a little yellow flame moving across her eyes.

"You *don't* like me," she said in a low voice. "You like Kadis Leigh." And as his eyes met hers without change, "It's true. And you might as well love the queen."

She turned from him a little and after a silence pushed the firestone into place with her boot.

"I suppose you thinks she likes you," she added then, certain that her thrust had reached the flesh, twisting the knife. "You imagine because she helped you with your work that she showed you a special favor. Kadis helps every body she goes with. That's the shape her flirtations take, reforming people. She thinks she was born to re-shape the earth. What else is her mountain work but the effort to make the people up here as nearly like the Leighs and Hoxies as possible?"

"Is it the part of loyalty," asked Felsinger, "to misrepresent a friend?"

"Kadis is not my friend," the little yellow flame lighting and darkening. "I don't have friends. I have lovers and foes. Kadis can't love as you'd very soon discover. And she'd cut you in little bits with her grandfather's old sword before she'd marry you—even if she did love you. They don't make misalliances in that family. They marry one another to avoid it. Judge Hoxie kicked over the traces, but he's been like a bell buoy, bobbing up and warning the rest of them ever since, in spite of all the money he got by it. That's why Kadis and Phil are marrying; there's nobody else good enough for either of them."

She stopped, noting the change that had swept his face.

"Didn't you know they were to be married?" she asked.

"You presume somewhat in making Miss Leigh's confidences for her," answered Felsinger.

"It's no confidence. Every one knows it. It is very curious that she has not told you."

"If every one knows it she probably thought it unnecessary."

"But it's odd," persisted Coral, "that she didn't mention it—just casually, intending you to take the school as she did. And now you are not going to take the school and the wedding's put off again."

"That is not true," said Felsinger bluntly. "Miss Leigh never intended that I should take the school."

"So she didn't tell you that either? . . . This is very curious. For what else was Phil Hoxie paying you a salary out of his own pocket? . . .

"You needn't get mad," as Felsinger straightened slightly. "I happen to have been here the night he paid you first. This school is not endowed as they told you it was. It's a ragged little thing built by a Miss Miles who had a scrap of money and was crazy about mountaineers. The Hoxies would do anything to get Kadis out of it, and so Phil coddled you along, meaning, I suppose, to get you interested. Only the night of the Leigh dance Judge Hoxie told Major Coberton that you were the man Kadis had got to take the mountain school when she gave it up. Kadis promised to give it up when she married Phil. And only last week Mrs. Leigh said you weren't to take it and that everything was put off again."

Coral had spoken more rapidly than was her habit. The yellow light had died in her eyes leaving them hard and brown. She looked up at Felsinger her head taking on a Puckish tilt.

"Does it hurt very much?" she asked.

He answered after a pause,

"I think on the whole I'm obliged to you."

Her eyes fell. A little rueful note crept into her voice.

"I've never understood," she said, "why a cat should want to look at a queen. There are so many things besides."

Then, lest the cryptic shot fall foul,

"Other cats," she added, lifting her gold lashes with a smile. "And little birds who are not afraid—and mice—and gold-fish. It's a wonderful world for cats. But I suppose when they have once looked at the queen—"

She paused but Felsinger did not protest the unfinished query. That was the puzzling thing about him. He neither contradicted nor agreed. "He won't take the hurdles nor go through the gates," she thought.

She did not look up at him now but stood trailing the tassel of her crop along her boot. Something in his eyes had had the effect of beating her own eyes down. It had seemed an easy tower to overturn, yet overturning it, she had unhoused something unfamiliar and not altogether tame for all its quietness.

She moved to the door and Felsinger, opening it for her, walked with her to the path, assisting her to mount.

In the saddle she glanced at him brightly.

"Good-bye," she said.

And with his answer she cantered away, taking the path toward Wunderschoen. At the curve she stopped and looked back.

Felsinger was no longer there.

When Kadis reached home that afternoon she found that Phil had come in during the day and had betaken himself to Judge Hoxie's office. He had been in Cuthbert as Kadis had supposed.

"But his father was nervous," Mrs. Leigh added, "so I sent Phil to reassure him. He's been going up on the mountain lately to see this Mr. Felsinger."

Kadis stared.

"Phil? But what on earth can he be seeing Mr. Felsinger about?"

"Something connected with the school, I suppose; trying to persuade him to go on with it."

She crocheted in silence for a moment, then she said,

"I had a little talk with Phil. He will tell you about it. It concerns the school."

But Kadis as she went up the stair was wondering where Phil could really have been. Not on the mountain, certainly.

Could it be Larry's again? He was acting now as he had acted then, in a defiant, headlong sort of way, more silent than ever in the presence of his father.

Did his father suspect that he might be playing again at Larry's? Did they blame her?

But of course they blamed her. If she had married Phil at the appointed time this would never have happened, marriage, as everybody knows, eradicating in young men all tendency to stray.

The impulse to see Phil and settle things had passed into resolve. She had not known when he would return from Cuthbert and so she had said no good-bye to the children. She would see them again, in any case.

Passing Felsinger's cabin on her way to school, she had been fearful of meeting him. During the day some change

had taken place in her, for on the way home she had looked at his open window with a hope that frightened her.

"I can't trust myself," she thought. "While I have a glimmer of reason left, let me settle things with Phil."

And there came to her an indistinct feeling that if she did the right thing—that is, if she married Phil—the problem of Little Glory would be magically worked out. Now with the very resolve to do the right thing had come her mother's announcement that she had told Phil something about the school. Had they really found a way?

But Phil did not stop to talk with her when he came in. After dinner he went to his room and Kadis who waited late, passed upstairs at last, puzzled and apprehensive.

It was Larry's again—or Phil would face her.

She would see him in the morning and get her mother's message, for her mother had said again, "Phil will tell you."

But next morning when she rode with him to the foot of Little Glory, she felt a barrier between herself and Phil. Whether it was of his own conscious erecting she could not know, but he guarded it well, foiling her every attempt to surmount it.

"He has not been to Larry's," she told herself.

His manner seemed neither headlong nor defiant now. He appeared merely to be standing his ground, and with a sort of dogged confidence. She liked him better in this attitude. Her driven sense sought shelter of him, but his door seemed shut against her.

She did not blame him. She had ceased to expect tolerance from any quarter, least of all from Phil. But things

had come to a strange pass when he would not deliver a message entrusted to him for her.

It was a mood, she told herself. When people were stored with moods they naturally disclosed new ones from time to time. She would bear with him until this one passed. Poor Kadis! She did not delve far enough into her own mood to discover that, had she been more sincerely desirous of solving the problem of Little Glory, she would not have waited for Phil to volunteer her mother's message.

They parted in silence and Kadis, taking the incline, glanced at the cabin only to notice that the door was closed. When she reached the school she found Felsinger sitting on the step among the boys.

"I have come back," he said when she came up to them and the children were filing into the school house.

He explained that he had found he needed to keep the place, that the afternoons were long now and that he could work on the serial after school.

Kadis did not reply as once and he added that he would like, when she gave up the school—he remembered that she had mentioned giving up the school—he would like to take charge of it, if she thought him capable.

"As you like," said Kadis finally.

Something was back of this, she felt. Some one had been talking to him. Was it Phil? Had Phil indeed been to him and was this her mother's message?

Her mother, when she questioned her that afternoon, looked at her blankly.

"Didn't Phil tell you?" she asked. "Your uncle and I had decided that you might go on with the school after you

are married; that is, until we could find some one. He is ready to improve the school, bring on a teacher, pay enough. But until we can adjust things you are to go on with it. At least that was what we agreed to between us," as Kadis stood silent.

"It is strange Phil didn't tell you. I think—I think Phil's pride has suffered, dear—don't you?"

But left to herself Mrs. Leigh did not blame Kadis so entirely. Going back to her own youth and the opposition that had attended her marriage—"Compounding poverty!" She would never forget her father's phrase—she could recall how that same opposition had fanned the fire of her romance until its very intensity overcame. So, obversely, their encouragement of Phil's and Kadis' courtship may have smothered the flame.

Phil, when she had told him of their concessions regarding the school, had been as undemonstrative as Kadis. She knew that it was Phil's wish that Kadis might do as she pleased regarding the school—yet he had not even told her! Well, left to themselves, things might be patched up between them. That seemed to her the wiser, indeed, the only course.

She confided her opinion to her brother and as a result the young people—somewhat to their surpsie and bewilderment —received no further prodding. Nature was supposed to be doing her part.

And Nature unquestionably was.

Kadis could not believe that wounded pride lay at the bottom of Phil's reserve—a reserve that persisted despite her friendliest advances. Almost she would have said that

he feared these advances and endeavored to forestall them. Whatever it was, she told herself again, it would pass. She could only wait till then. Meantime, she took her accustomed path up Little Glory, though she rode Lafayette Pike alone. Colfax Valley had been cleared and Phil's duties took him now in other directions. She saw Phil very seldom.

From her daily meetings with Felsinger she found soon that she had nothing to fear. Never could she have recognized in him the man who had walked with her that night in Roslyn's garden. He was not even the friend that she had known before that night. Some change had taken place within him, a change that was in some way connected with his return to the school.

Phil was not responsible for this return. Once she asked Felsinger if Phil had been to see him and Felsinger had answered no. So wherever Phil had been going, it was not to see Felsinger, unless Felsinger had spoken falsely and this she somehow could not believe. She had no opportunity to question Felsinger further, even if his manner had encouraged questioning, for he walked beside her no longer as she rode toward home. His classes closed before hers and he did not wait. Often she heard his typewriter when she passed the cabin.

She told herself that she was glad of this change. It was her protection since she had not Phil to hold to. Yet she puzzled over it more than over his return. Wilda Thorn, it might be, had told him that she—Kadis—had asked her to prepare herself to take the school. Felsinger might well

have pieced things together and discovered that she had transferred these particular hopes to him. He might have felt a sudden obligation to fulfill them.

Had he at the same instant heard of her impending marriage to Phil? It might be. He might have heard of that at any time, though for some reason, indistinct in her mind until lately, she had not cared to mention it to him herself. But it was not this—or this alone—that had changed him. That moment in the garden they had been so close that in the instant of her resistance to him, in the instant of her awakening, she had felt a corresponding awakening within him, an awakening ruder than her own. She had been able to speak but he had stood silent. In that silence something had fallen from him like a cloak, something woven of their days together, their eager groping toward each other, their walking hand in hand in the dark. And when a moment later he had gone in obedience to her command, he had left that something there.

What had his awakening been? Something that brought back to him the consciousness of fetters stronger than those that bound her to Roslyn or to Phil. For all his strength, he was powerless. She might walk close to him without fear.

But he did not wish her to walk close. Could it be that he feared her more than she feared him? Could be that he did not know she too was bound? Had Wilda perhaps not mentioned this? Then she herself would set his mind at rest and tell him. . . . What was she thinking of? Did she not desire most of all that he should avoid her? Was it not in this very avoidance that her safety lay?

Kadis lay wide-eyed on her pillow many times in these nights, threading this zig-zag path into a blank dawn.

. . . . . .

"Dear Kadis: (wrote Coral)

"The wedding went off like a circus. Ellen got home in time to rope Maury out of the lady's hands—I told you, didn't I? that she nearly lost him to his old love—and now they're on their way to China and Japan.

"You should have seen me, so white and broad-brimmed and demure, with rosebuds drooping. The bride wore white lace, the same as her veil, sixteen inches from the ground and decolleté. Maury didn't get a pig in a poke when he married Ellen.

"I'm not crazy about Maury Prescott. I think he's still batty—not from his accident, but just naturally. Ellen and Aunt Nelly don't agree with me. He's good looking in a dark, rather cynical way, and he has a nice barytone, but he's the sort of man who gravitates to the center of the floor and deliberately absorbs all the spot-light.

"I've seen the Mrs. Raeburn who nearly spoiled Ellen's party. How Ellen hates her! I never realized until I got out here and went with Ellen to a dance at Mrs. Raeburn's house. Ellen had told me very little about her—only that she's horrid. She's beautiful enough to be very horrid. And her clothes—so simple—and yet so wise! I have never seen anything so absorbing as her eyes, black with impossible fringes. They are sorrowful, almost Madonna eyes. She wears the small, very new coiffure—no knot at all—and long earrings in jade or dull onyx, never anything that glitters, so

close to her face, nothing that throws her eyes into the background. Her teeth are not very good and she seldom smiles.

"There's lots of underground rumor about her—most of it, I fancy, about her and Maury; but nobody appears to know anything definite—I'll say she's clever!—so everybody goes to her house. There's a Central American dancing attendance on her now, a coffee king with one of those over-grown tropical fortunes. He can only gaze, it seems, for she has a husband somewhere. She says very little about this husband, though nobody knows anything against him except that he took French leave—for France—early in the war. The Central American, I hear, doesn't understand divorce. People won't talk to me about her on account of Ellen.

"I danced twice with the coffee king. It was dizzying to move around with a person who never waits for his change, or it may have been merely the whirling Central American variety of the one-step that went to my head. At any rate, I let him know that I was not impeded with a husband. He left me, however, to return to Mrs. Raeburn with all her handicap.

"The only person I seemed to impress was a banker, a mature widower by the name of MacDonald. Why do mature widowers always take to me? This one has a fortune too—just one of our familiar American fortunes, and a little mellower than most of these western ones. He has also two sons, one of whom I haven't met. The one I did meet is the best boy on earth—according to his father. He looks it. I understand he has an extraordinary business head. I can testify first hand that he has all the hilarious charm of a piece of ticker tape. I saw Papa MacDonald was trying to lure me into the family so I asked him about his other son.

If he wants to interest me he must show me his samples.

" 'Thad did great things in France,' he said, and that was all. I am to meet this Thad at a dance the MacDonalds are giving at one of the country clubs tonight.

"Aunt Nelly doesn't like my going to this dance. She's down on the MacDonalds for some reason. Said Thad MacDonald was as wild as the dickens, that his being there ought to be enough to keep decent people away. I told her I didn't see how a man who had won the something-or-other and been kissed by Foch could be so bad. She said if he'd stopped at kissing Foch she wouldn't complain. I've asked other people what he did and nobody will tell me. They merely stare and say they can't imagine. I'll ask Thad himself tonight. You can see how fascinating he must be.

"The funny part is Aunt Nelly used to like the MacDonalds. She got Sanda from them but I took a fancy to Sanda when Jack and I visited out here and I took her home with me.

"Anyhow, Aunt Nelly never fusses much about anything I do. She wants me to stay with her. She misses Ellen so much that she leans on me. Not that I'm looking for anything like that.

"Mendoza is gay all summer long, but we're leaving in a week for the lakes. Aunt Nelly thinks it's hot.

"What was the Langs' tea like? Wasn't it funny how they waited till Ellen was gone? Are you teaching through the heat, you poor thing? How is your pet bear on the mountain? Do you really think you can make him into something? Write me all the news.

"Coral."

XV

The summer passed. Dahlias took the place of hollyhocks in Roslyn's gardens; hydrangeas flowered like drifts of fallen cloud; the white clematis was everywhere, and on the mountain the barbary bush put forth her scarlet berries making ready to bless the winter with her little measure of color; the goldenrod scattered her sunshine along roadway and hollow, and now, with the hoeing done, the shortening days grew longer at Little Glory School.

A casual friendliness sprang up between Phil and Kadis, a friendliness that to the girl seemed like some pleasant surface on which, if she trod too heavily, she would break through upon the old mood of silence. Their elders watched them from afar. Nature, it seemed, was very slow.

But Phil was seldom out at night. The old dark aloofness seemed in a measure gone from him. It returned in flashes only when they questioned him.

Kadis, wiser than they, refrained from questioning. She told Phil of Felsinger's return to the school, of his willingness to continue there, not knowing what Phil's answer would be.

"I will write his cheque," had been Phil's only comment. And then, remembering, "But he prefers currency. I will give it to you for him."

Kadis laid the money on Felsinger's desk while he was out at noon. Later he brought her his receipt, thanked her. It was the most he had said to her for many days.

But toward the end of August she came upon him among the little hills beyond Colfax Valley. It was a Saturday

afternoon and Kadis had been to the home of one of her pupils who was ill. She had taken a basket of fruit and a thermos bottle filled with Aunt Dilsey's chicken broth. Now, coming again into the sunshine, she found that Beauregard whom she had left grazing as was her custom was no longer there.

She had never known Beauregard to desert her and a sudden apprehension mingled with her thought of the long walk home. Just then she saw Felsinger coming from among the hills, a rod over his shoulder, a brace of rainbow trout in his hand.

"Beauregard gone?" he asked as he came nearer. "I saw him in Lost Cove. There's a cabin on a hill and I thought he was waiting for you. I'll go back and get him."

"I'll go with you," said Kadis, not knowing how to find the place. "He might not come to you. How he ever came to go off like that. Some one must have ridden him."

Felsinger hid fish and tackle behind a rhododendron bush and they started off together. Kadis praised his trout and asked about his serial, almost in a single breath. She found it needful that they talk, the old silences into which they had slipped so easily and which they had borne so comfortably, seeming no longer possible between them.

Their path led through a hollow amid new fires of goldenrod, then for a little way along the river where Felsinger had lately fished. He showed her the place, in the shadow of elms and willows where there was almost no current at all.

Fall was already in the air. There was a mildness and wariness about the sunshine, a little edge to the breeze as it came from a low-hung cloud. The leaves were taking on

bright edges and here and there a young maple had already flamed into a burning bush.

Felsinger's hand moved to Kadis' arm as they took the narrow bridge that spanned the river. It was a bridge that had stood the test of time but it felt unsteady to the foot and here and there a plank had broken. Kadis did not speak again until they had entered the world of little hills that made the farther bank.

"I remember now," she said, "We came to Lost Cove once on a picnic. Somewhere among these hills is the Haunted Cave. See what little clusters the hills are in—they seem to huddle. You know the story of the cave, how some soldiers hid in it during the war, and away back in it a hundred of them were caught and killed. There's a crypt there filled with bones and so they say it's haunted. We staid until midnight watching for the ghosts. . . . Now, where did you see Beauregard?"

Felsinger pointed to a peak beyond the little hills. A sudden peal of thunder covered his reply.

"We'll have to hurry," said Kadis. "It's going to storm."

They started forward when the growing darkness grew instantly yellow-white and earth and heaven seemed split with a sudden deafening crash.

Kadis stopped. Involuntarily, Felsinger's hand went out and clasped hers while he looked about the hills for some near-by place of shelter.

"If we could find the cave," whispered Kadis. Then she covered her eyes. Again the yellow light and a crash that left the smell of sulphur in the air.

Scarcely knowing where they went, they fled deeper into the hills. The rain was too quick for them. It came headlong.

"Poor Beauregard!" panted Kadis. "And my saddle—"

Deeper among the hills they fled, finding in their overlapping walls a wind-break, if not a shelter from the rain.

"Look!" cried Kadis suddenly.

The lightening had revealed a house among the hills, a tiny, low-roofed structure covered with poplar bark, as closely hidden from the world as if it had been shut in the foldings of some gigantic rose. A moment later they stood on its step, Felsinger striving with the door.

"Wait," he said. "I'll try a window."

There were but two. He was obliged to break a pane to open one of these. Then he climbed inside, letting Kadis in by the door. She stood in the center of the room, then after a lightning flash she said,

"I see a lamp. Please light it."

The house was a single room but it was not the room of a mountain cabin. The floor was softly carpeted. There was a fire-place with a grate, a fine old bed hung with rose-colored curtains a shade deeper than the walls. The lamp stood on a quaint gate-legged table. There were two chairs covered with flowered cretonne.

Kadis, moving to the fire-place, put out a hand as if expecting to find warmth in the ashes there. Her eyes turned to Felsinger who stood beside the table intent on something he had found beneath the lamp. Presently he looked up.

"Shall I make a fire?" he asked.

"Please—if you will."

There was an almost frightened look on Kadis' face. She could not explain the feeling to herself, but the room seemed thronged with ghosts. They had laid invisible hands on her as she entered the door. She moved now among them—through them. Was Felsinger aware of them? She looked at him kneeling on the hearth. He had found kindling and wood in a hearth-box of hammered brass, and now his fire began to crack and blaze in heartening rivalry with the storm, that thing of glares and crashes, of wind and driving rain. Kadis took some of the papers from the hearth-box and thrust them into the broken pane. She laid off coat and tam, shaking back her dark, rain-flecked hair.

Felsinger still knelt by the hearth, brushing up the litter he had made. Kadis went over to him. She felt somehow afraid to stay apart by the window. As she went she thought, "They draw me to him. The ghosts draw me to his side." She was silent, wondering at herself. Then she said softly,

"Do you feel as if something—as if some one—"

He looked up at her, so strange a light in his eyes, that she went on more lightly,

"I have heard that all houses have ghosts—the thoughts of the people who have lived in them. It must be that when the houses are empty the ghosts have their way; nobody to drown them with chatter or drive them into closets. Perhaps if we stay here long enough we'll exorcise these."

"We need not fear them at any rate," answered Felsinger rising.

Kadis sat down in one of the flowered chairs. It was not precisely fear she felt. The ghosts were very gentle ghosts. They would be very gentle if she would let them have their way with her, like some softly swirling current that she fought half asleep. She had no fear she told herself but she leaned above the fire holding her hand close to the blaze, letting it burn her palm, in the instinctive resolve to keep awake. "I will not look at him," she thought.

Felsinger went over to the window and stood watching the storm. Kadis fought back the impulse to rise. She turned to the table and took from beneath the lamp a book which she had seen Felsinger examining when first they came, a little volume of Shakespeare bound in dark blue ooze. It fell open at her touch. Kadis' eye moved along the marked passages. She fixed her mind upon them.

"My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep . . ."

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet."

" . . . And the place death, considering who thou art."

"O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
From off the battlements of yonder tower . . ."

Threadbare passages, still fresh to some unjaded eye, their hues matching the fabric of a life.

Kadis closed the book. It had been as if she had heard the ghosts speak, as if she had touched them. And touching

them, her fear—or whatever it had been—was gone. Another fear came swiftly in its place, a fear more tangible, more easily dealt with. . . .

Whose hidden nest was this? How long had its tenants been gone? Suppose they should return and find themselves discovered? . . .

Kadis laid the book in its place and, rising, opened the door. The storm was passing, leaving a loose rain that seemed to fall through a shaft of light. Blue rifts showed amid the flying clouds.

"I will go up and find your horse," said Felsinger. "Wait here."

She snatched up coat and cap, shaking her head.

"You might never find your way back to me. Shall we put out the fire?"

He glanced apprehensively at her already damp shoes, threw some ashes on the blaze while Kadis turned out the lamp. On the step she waited till Felsinger locked the door again and made his exit through the window. They went through the lessening rain, knowing that they could not miss coming out on the river bank by keeping always to the right; and coming out they found Beauregard drinking by the water's edge.

"I knew it!" cried Kadis and Beauregard lifted his head at her voice. "Somebody rode you, didn't he, Beau?" she crooned, while Felsinger wiped off her wet saddle and laid his coat across it. "Somebody stole you and when it began to storm you started home."

Felsinger walked at her side as she rode and though Kadis talked now and then, she was not afraid of silence when it

came. The little house had cast a spell upon them both, a spell that the air and the returning sunlight were powerless to dissipate.

If after that day Kadis discerned a change in Felsinger—something of his old manner, even of his old friendly habits—she knew that it was but an outward show. He had not returned to his former self. He had but lost the fear that he might return, as if by some perilous way he had crossed with her into a moment of testing and found himself secure. And of that security she asked herself: Was it indeed chains that had held him, or had he been able to snatch out the very roots of the impulse that had turned him to her that night in the garden? One thing she knew, her own security had leaned on his. Her chains were lax and the roots of feeling thrust deeper as their leaf and flower were denied the light.

The year moved deeper into the fall, a fall that flamed to strange crimson in wood and sky, its fires quenched at last by the long November rains. Little Glory School closed for the winter and Mrs. Leigh who had discovered some time before that Kadis was not looking well, went with her to New York for a month's holiday.

Mrs. Leigh's censure rested in these days on Phil. She had not been unobservant of the advances Kadis had made or of Phil's repulsings, though repulsing was perhaps too strong a word; withdrawal would be better. She felt that Phil was carrying resentment a shade too far and it was well that he and Kadis should be separated for a while.

Mrs. Leigh said nothing of these reflections to her brother.

Judge Hoxie was entertaining his annual visitor, the grippe, and preparing to depart for Florida at the close of this court term. So far as he could observe, Kadis and Phil were getting on equably, if resultlessly. He left for Florida late in November. A week later, owing to the perilous condition of the roads and the growing need of his being daily at the mines, Phil took up his residence in Cuthbert. Shortly after Kadis' return he ran down for a week-end. Their meeting struck no spark of the old fire—if fire it had been. Mrs. Leigh was beginning to wonder a little.

Kadis had been eager to get back to her mountain people, knowing the privation the cold had brought. The Monday Phil left she began her rounds among them, going into the hills beyond Colfax Valley, taking narrow ledges where the slipping of her horse's foot would have meant the fall of hundreds of feet, bearing as always Dilsey's broth for the sick she might find, warm garments for the new babies, blankets—all that Beauregard could carry up such steep trails.

She told herself that Little Glory needed her least of all. The road touched it now and Wunderschoen had even a telephone in its general store. They were not like her children buried in the hills. Yet nevertheless, the last of the week saw her scaling the steps of Little Glory with laden saddle-bags.

Amid the bare branches of the dogwood she stopped short. Felsinger's cabin looked as it had looked last winter, before he came. Boards had been nailed across windows and doors. Fallen leaves had drifted against the door and on the step. The rain left a dark, wet stain around them.

Kadis sat very still. Presently she slipped down and leading Beauregard, walked to the porch and stood looking at the fallen leaves. At length she passed under the cherry trees, crossed the clearing and knocked on Mrs. Thorn's door.

Mrs. Thorn admitted her, seeming almost glad to see her again.

"Wildy!" she called.

Wilda came to the kitchen door. Seeing Kadis, she grew a shade paler, half withdrew. Kadis took the girl's hand in both of hers, holding her. Wilda had changed. Her beauty had a richness, a faint glow of maturity that Kadis had not looked for.

"We-uns is all well," Mrs. Thorn was saying in answer to Kadis' enquiries. "All 'ceptin Ben, and I 'low he's all right by now. I ain't a-carin' ef he air or not. Like I say, men-folks is pizen 'round a place. Allers a-makin' trouble."

"Has Ben been ill?" asked Kadis.

"Ain't you done heared? We wouldn't let him have no still here on the mounting, me and Wildy, and he useter say as how he was a-goin' back to Dolway where he come from. Lawsie, I useter wish he'd go and git it over. He was a plague, a-pesterin' Wildy and a-spyin' on her, a-sayin' things what wasn't so about the gal—as good a ga as ever lived."

Kadis released Wilda's hand, feeling it stiffen within her own. She had come to ask news of Felsinger but she knew that she must first hear news of Ben.

"He was evil-minded, Ben was. My man didn' send him here ter hatch lies. One night Wildy got lost a-comin'

from Hoodoo Nan's. I ain't knowed she went, but I'd done been a-drappin' things fer a week. Ever'thing I'd tech I'd drap. And Wildy, a-sayin' nothin', went to see Nan about hit. Nan cured Tony, the caow, and Wildy 'lowed she could cure me. But the rain come and she got lost. I ain't a-sayin' it warn't dumb-like of her ter git lost—but that's how it were. And when she come in she jest creeped inter the kitchen, not a-makin' no sound. I reckon you heared about hit. Ben had ever' thing on the mounting, includin' of Jerry Felsinger, out a-lookin' fer her."

"Where is Mr. Felsinger now?" asked Kadis as she paused.

"Felsinger's done went. Like I say, I told Ben he couldn't run no still 'round here, seein' the trouble stills has done brung on me, and I specified I didn't keer whether he left er not, seein' he warn't a-bringin' in nothin' but devil-tracks. Folks say he writ ter Wildy's dad a-tellin' his lies in the letter; ain't I allers said writin's the devil? . . . Anyways, he left the mounting the fust of last July and started his still over in Dolway. And like I knowed he would, he ketched a bullet. The law didn't git him fer he sneaked away, but he hed ter lay all thet endurin' night in a wet holler, and he ketched cold in the bullet, and he's done got too crippled ter git back. Howsomever, he's most likely ter git well any day. The devil takes keer of his own."

"How long has Mr. Felsinger been gone?" asked Kadis.

"I dunno fer sartin. Wildy kin tell ye. Wildy, how long's Jerry Felsinger been gone? All them Felsingers was quare folks. I 'member when ol' Lije Felsinger—Wildy, how long's

Felsinger been gone?" for Wilda who had withdrawn into the kitchen came now and stood in the door.

Mr. Felsinger had been gone a month. He had seemed troubled when he left, but had said that his work was finished and there was no reason for his staying. He had told no one where he was going, but he had left money with Shad Sprauss who was to carry the typewriter back to Miss Leigh. Shad had not come for the typewriter yet. Some one had told him that Miss Leigh was not at home.

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In Wunderschoen she found much illness. Sprauss the Hessian was down and the neighbors were generally too stricken to help him. He received Kadis with meekness. Shad appeared to be the only inhabitant of Wunderschoen, thoroughly healthy and good-spirited. Kadis' heart yearned over him because he talked of Felsinger. He would bring the typewriter home tomorrow—and the money, there was two months' back rent. He had not spent it—except fifty cents which Felsinger had given him for taking it home. No, Mr. Felsinger was not coming back. He had said so.

Kadis remained in Wunderschoen until late making the rounds more than once, going home by the long way rather than pass the empty cabin.

That night Felsinger returned, pried off the boards from windows and doors, built a fire. He sat late by the window, smoking, looking out on the woods, bare and black under the quiet stars.

Kadis could not always go to Wunderschoen by the long way. Illness became too grave among her children for her to delay on her way to them. And so it came about that three days later she rode up Little Glory and as her glance lighted on the smoke from the cabin chimney, Felsinger came out to greet her.

He was on his way to the store in Wunderschoen; might he walk with her? Yes, he had been away—to New York. Certainly he would have looked her up if he had known where to look. Why did he go? Well, why should he stay? His work at the school was finished—and so was the serial.

"Then why did you come back?" asked Kadis.

A sort of silent cry had risen in her at sight of him. She had felt at that moment that she must touch him to make sure that he was real, yet at the sound of his voice she had sat very still. If she touched him—what might she not do? Might not the tears come? . . . Yet he held out his hand and she clasped it. There were no tears. She was even laughing a little as she talked with him.

"Shall I tell you?" asked Felsinger, looking up as he trudged beside her.

She remembered her question, and the color that had flamed in her face at sight of him, receded slightly, burned again. She had a sense of unlocking some door between herself and danger.

"Of course—tell me," she said.

"There is more than one reason, but I will tell you the first. I would not be a slave."

She thought over this in silence, then she said,

"Was that why you went away—or why you came back?"

"It is why I came back. I went away because—" He smiled. "I told myself I went to take my finished serial, but as a matter of fact—Did you ever have a premonition? Did you ever obey one? If you ever did you know the boneless feeling the obedience gives you. It was because of that feeling I came back."

"But a premonition of what?"

He shrugged.

"How do I know? It merely told me to get out."

"Does it—tell you still?"

"Not so strongly. You see I defied it."

"But to defy the unseen—" ventured Kadis. She had that vague reverence for the occult characteristic of imaginative minds.

"Defy it or be its slave," said Felsinger. "This living alone plays the dickens. Once I'd got away I began to see clearly. But I couldn't work up there—the crowds and the noises—I merely rambled, spending money. The next thing they'd have paid me for my story and I'd have made away with that too. You see I began to evolve some counter premonitions. If you knew what the sight of the woods

brought me that first night, even black and gray as they were, and the sunset in the gap—it was like a goblet of wine."

He glanced up at Kadis.

"You don't mean to say my premonition worries you?"

"No. But I wonder what such things really are."

"Wandering human thoughts, what else? Perhaps mine was the mere hypnotic suggestion of some one who wished me to leave. Where couldn't it have driven me, once it had got me going? No matter. Tell me all you did while you were away."

Felsinger proved himself an efficient attendant that morning, going the rounds with Kadis and not leaving her until they parted at his door. Kadis riding home, a sort of chill permeating her joy, reflected that she had not asked him for his other reason in returning. It was fruitless to speculate upon it, and as for the premonition—if only it did not make itself heard again.

In the days that followed, climbing the steep of Little Glory on her way to Wunderschoen, her heart sometimes lost a beat, gaining it again as her eye fell on the smoke issuing from the cabin chimney and her ear caught the click of the old typewriter, a muffled irregular note like the noise of a woodpecker hammering in one of the dead trees.

XVI

Kadis had little news from Coral in these days. After that first letter there had come random postcards depicting the lakes and hotels of the various resorts to which Mrs. Seftone was betaking herself with Coral in tow. They were

now in California ready to run up to Seattle when Ellen and her bridegroom should return.

One snowy December morning Kadis came downstairs to hear a sound of scratching on the conservatory door. She opened it to discover Wee who scurried inside leaving an upturned basket in testimony that he was a visitor by the design of others than himself.

Kadis succored him with warm milk and gave him a nest on the library couch, meaning to call Sanda later and make enquiries. But Coral's house could not be roused by the telephone and only a card from Coral five days later explained the presence of Wee who was now receiving Roslyn's guests with all the vociferous ceremony he had once accorded to Coral's:

"Wasn't it paltry in Sanda marrying the Lang's chauffeur and moving to Pittsburg? After all I've done for her."

Kadis had thought that the departure of Sanda would prolong Coral's stay in the West; however a second card announced that Mrs. Valentine would soon leave for home and that she had much to tell.

Christmas had drawn near and Kadis was busy with the gifts that would make the festival of her flock. Wherever she went now among the hills she carried gaily wrapped parcels not to be opened until the eventful day. For those who lived nearer there would be the tree on Christmas Eve at the church in Wunderschoen, and there were few mountain passes within a radius of five miles that would not be descended on foot for the event.

Mrs. Leigh helped Kadis with the preparations for this Christmas. Many an hour she sewed tarlatan bags and

filled them with vari-colored candies, or wrought useless knick-knacks of tinsel and paper, cutting out pictures and pasting them on gilt cornucopias, sorting gloves and mittens and woolly stockings, wrapping them in red and white paper and tying them with bright cord.

Judge Hoxie from Florida had sent Kadis a cheque for the work and Phil had crowned it with another. They seemed all of them trying to make up to her for something. Phil promised, if he could, to come home for the tree in Wunderschoen, though Kadis had no intention that he should accompany her on that evening. Always, before the capture of Thorn and his men, even in the days of Miss Miles, Phil had gone with her to the tree. Last Christmas there had been no celebration because of the plague, and this year Judge Hoxie had exacted a promise that Phil should not go again on the mountain—or near it. Kadis explained to her mother that Felsinger would see her home from the tree. It would be no more than dusk when she went.

But it was after midnight that Christmas Eve when Kadis started home. It was cold—a grim, bitter cold. Snow that had fallen the night before had melted under a brief sun and tonight was freezing. Kadis had looked for the change and was warmly dressed. Her heavy serge habit was lined with doe skin. She wore a mole-fur cap and scarf and her boots and gloves were fleece-lined. The cold nipped only her face.

Felsinger had not been at the tree. Kadis, passing the cabin on her way to Wunderschoen had stopped there, meaning to ask him to the tree, wanting his help; but, though the door opened at her touch and a fire burned on the hearth, he was not there. The stores would be open tonight,

she recalled, and he had probably gone into town, perhaps even to Wunderschoen. He would surely hear of the celebration if he had gone to Wunderschoen. It might be she would overtake him. In the path ahead of her she had indeed seen a man's figure indistinctly outlined in the dusk. But, as she called, the man disappeared amid the pines. Kadis noticed that he limped, and later at the tree she thought she saw Ben Cotrell standing by the door.

She had no fear as she came now through the frozen woods, her path lighted now and then by a late moon as it peered, white and broken, through a rift in the clouds. If Felsinger's light was burning she would call out to him just to keep faith with her mother.

Felsinger's light was burning. Kadis discovered this as soon as she neared the path, and now it seemed that she saw some one moving ahead of her, keeping to the edge of the woods. It was the figure of a woman, that was all she could discern at this distance, besides the furtiveness of the bent head and the sudden backward glance as Beauregard trod on a dry twig. The figure hurried on, moving lightly over the slippery ground. The moon veiled itself again and Kadis doubted if she had been seen amid the pines.

Again the moonlight as she came into the clearing. Without glancing back the figure broke from the path and ran upon Felsinger's porch. Apparently the door was locked for there sounded as Kadis drew near, a soft knocking. Almost at once the door opened. The moonlight fell on the face of Wilda Thorn as she entered, glancing behind her, and on Felsinger closing the door. Instantly the light in the window disappeared. The cabin was black dark.

Beauregard had never paused. Kadis put out a groping hand. . . .

"Wait!" whispered Wilda, catching Felsinger's arm as she stood beside him in the dark. "Don't strike a match . . ."

She had flown to the light and blown it out. Felsinger waited until her uneven breathing should allow her to speak again.

"Pap's come home—he's on parole for Christmas. Ben's home too. Ben's been a-writin' ter Pap. You must tell Phil. You must go ter town and tell Phil not ter come . . . Oh, my God—what's that?"

"Nothing," said Felsinger. He drew her nearer the fire. She had come through the cold with no outer wrap. "Now tell me what you mean," he said.

She pressed a hand against her breast as if to quiet her breathing.

"Pap's come home ter get Phil. Some of 'em are layin' fer him in Lost Cove and some here. I was goin' ter meet him in the cove—I'd got in the hills—and I heared 'em talkin'—then I saw the house was burnin'—the house in the cove—they'd set it a-fire. Don't try ter understand—just go. Tell him not ter come ternight—I do hear somethin'," she broke off, clutching his sleeve. "I hear a horse nicker. I heared a horse behind me just now."

Felsinger went into the bedroom and began to get into his clothes.

"You say Phil Hoxie's in town?"

"He'll get in at midnight. If his train's on time he's most here. He'll go home for his horse—he comes horseback now.

Kadis sat very still. Presently she slipped down and leading Beauregard, walked to the porch and stood looking at the fallen leaves. At length she passed under the cherry trees, crossed the clearing and knocked on Mrs. Thorn's door.

Mrs. Thorn admitted her, seeming almost glad to see her again.

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XVI

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"Where is Mr. Felsinger now?" asked Kadis as she paused.

"Felsinger's done went. Like I say, I told Ben he couldn't run no still 'round here, seein' the trouble stills has done brung on me, and I specified I didn't keer whether he left er not, seein' he warn't a-bringin' in nothin' but devil-tracks. Folks say he writ ter Wildy's dad a-tellin' his lies in the letter; ain't I allers said writin's the devil? . . . Anyways, he left the mounting the fust of last July and started his still over in Dolway. And like I knowed he would, he ketched a bullet. The law didn't git him fer he sneaked away, but he hed ter lay all thet endurin' night in a wet holler, and he ketched cold in the bullet, and he's done got too crippled ter git back. Howsomever, he's most likely ter git well any day. The devil takes keer of his own."

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Kadis fared on toward Wunderschoen with a heavy heart. Felsinger had said nothing to her of his prospective leaving. It must have been a sudden decision on his part. He was gone then all the while she was in New York, and she had been thinking of him as here. Delaying to pass the cabin as she had, she knew now that it had been her goal ever since her return, ever since she had gone away. Why should he have gone like this unless he meant to return? . . . Yet the barred doors and windows—what could they mean except that he was gone for good, except that the little she had come to ask of life was taken away? . . .

In Wunderschoen she found much illness. Sprauss the Hessian was down and the neighbors were generally too stricken to help him. He received Kadis with meekness. Shad appeared to be the only inhabitant of Wunderschoen, thoroughly healthy and good-spirited. Kadis' heart yearned over him because he talked of Felsinger. He would bring the typewriter home tomorrow—and the money, there was two months' back rent. He had not spent it—except fifty cents which Felsinger had given him for taking it home. No, Mr. Felsinger was not coming back. He had said so.

Kadis remained in Wunderschoen until late making the rounds more than once, going home by the long way rather than pass the empty cabin.

That night Felsinger returned, pried off the boards from windows and doors, built a fire. He sat late by the window, smoking, looking out on the woods, bare and black under the quiet stars.

Kadis could not always go to Wunderschoen by the long way. Illness became too grave among her children for her to delay on her way to them. And so it came about that three days later she rode up Little Glory and as her glance lighted on the smoke from the cabin chimney, Felsinger came out to greet her.

He was on his way to the store in Wunderschoen; might he walk with her? Yes, he had been away—to New York. Certainly he would have looked her up if he had known where to look. Why did he go? Well, why should he stay? His work at the school was finished—and so was the serial.

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Kadis sat very still. Presently she slipped down and leading Beauregard, walked to the porch and stood looking at the fallen leaves. At length she passed under the cherry trees, crossed the clearing and knocked on Mrs. Thorn's door.

Mrs. Thorn admitted her, seeming almost glad to see her again.

"Wildy!" she called.

Wilda came to the kitchen door. Seeing Kadis, she grew a shade paler, half withdrew. Kadis took the girl's hand in both of hers, holding her. Wilda had changed. Her beauty had a richness, a faint glow of maturity that Kadis had not looked for.

"We-uns is all well," Mrs. Thorn was saying in answer to Kadis' enquiries. "All 'ceptin Ben, and I 'low he's all right by now. I ain't a-carin' ef he air or not. Like I say, men-folks is pizen 'round a place. Allers a-makin' trouble."

"Has Ben been ill?" asked Kadis.

"Ain't you done heared? We wouldn't let him have no still here on the mounting, me and Wildy, and he useter say as how he was a-goin' back to Dolway where he come from. Lawsie, I useter wish he'd go and git it over. He was a plague, a-pesterin' Wildy and a-spyin' on her, a-sayin' things what wasn't so about the gal—as good a ga as ever lived."

Kadis released Wilda's hand, feeling it stiffen within her own. She had come to ask news of Felsinger but she knew that she must first hear news of Ben.

"He was evil-minded, Ben was. My man didn' send him here ter hatch lies. One night Wildy got lost a-comin'

from Hoodoo Nan's. I ain't knowed she went, but I'd done been a-drappin' things fer a week. Ever'thing I'd tech I'd drap. And Wildy, a-sayin' nothin', went to see Nan about hit. Nan cured Tony, the caow, and Wildy 'lowed she could cure me. But the rain come and she got lost. I ain't a-sayin' it warn't dumb-like of her ter git lost—but that's how it were. And when she come in she jest creeped inter the kitchen, not a-makin' no sound. I reckon you heared about hit. Ben had ever' thing on the mounting, includin' of Jerry Felsinger, out a-lookin' fer her."

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Mrs. Leigh helped Kadis with the preparations for this Christmas. Many an hour she sewed tarlatan bags and

filled them with vari-colored candies, or wrought useless knick-knacks of tinsel and paper, cutting out pictures and pasting them on gilt cornucopias, sorting gloves and mittens and woolly stockings, wrapping them in red and white paper and tying them with bright cord.

Judge Hoxie from Florida had sent Kadis a cheque for the work and Phil had crowned it with another. They seemed all of them trying to make up to her for something. Phil promised, if he could, to come home for the tree in Wunderschoen, though Kadis had no intention that he should accompany her on that evening. Always, before the capture of Thorn and his men, even in the days of Miss Miles, Phil had gone with her to the tree. Last Christmas there had been no celebration because of the plague, and this year Judge Hoxie had exacted a promise that Phil should not go again on the mountain—or near it. Kadis explained to her mother that Felsinger would see her home from the tree. It would be no more than dusk when she went.

But it was after midnight that Christmas Eve when Kadis started home. It was cold—a grim, bitter cold. Snow that had fallen the night before had melted under a brief sun and tonight was freezing. Kadis had looked for the change and was warmly dressed. Her heavy serge habit was lined with doe skin. She wore a mole-fur cap and scarf and her boots and gloves were fleece-lined. The cold nipped only her face.

Felsinger had not been at the tree. Kadis, passing the cabin on her way to Wunderschoen had stopped there, meaning to ask him to the tree, wanting his help; but, though the door opened at her touch and a fire burned on the hearth, he was not there. The stores would be open tonight,

about it, knotted and wrapped and knotted again. Guarding the mouth of the bag, she shook the contents upon the rug. Instantly she recoiled as if she had released a serpent.

A pool of black and green lay on the rug, a necklace of dark and bright jewels that emitted somber flashes in the firelight. Kneeling she sat back on her feet, regarding it with wide, hard eyes, her hand clenched on her mouth.

At last she bent over, lifted the necklace in her fingers. Minutely she examined the gold filigree. Again she let it fall, her eyes narrowing upon it.

Presently she thrust it back into the bag and sat staring at the fire.

XVIII

Kadis had entered upon her second day at home where Dr. Strangeland, to judge by the orders he had left with Dilsey, was preparing to wreak upon her a vengeance that had been gathering force the last three years. His patient must have rest, he said—no company, no excitement. What did young ladies think they were made of these days? Tacks and sole-leather? Well, even sole-leather wears out in time.

Kadis did not rebel. All the weapons of her rebellion were broken—gone. She lay under her crimson canopy, feeling her body still an empty shell, feeling as if her life had been indeed the red light dancing in Felsinger's cabin, the light that had never found her as she watched it from the narrow cot. Did it dance there still? . . .

The snow was falling lightly against the pane. She could see the trees beyond it growing whiter and whiter. She

watched the snow as she had watched the red light, her hand resting on Wee's head. Wee had been lying beside her ever since she came home. He slept most of the day, resting from his violent responsibilities, his nose between his paws, his silky ears flowing down upon the spread.

Old Dilsey slept, too—dozed deeply over by the window, her head in its big white cap dropped to one side, the old black hands lax in her lap.

Kadis envied her watchers their sleep. Since her waking that dawn in the cabin, she had not closed her eyes.

Phil had returned to Cuthbert the day before. Mrs. Leigh and Dilsey were reticent as to why he had gone. "No excitement," had been the doctor's orders. Ah well, the strike must have been called, mused Kadis. The thought did not disturb her. She wondered a little at this.

Mrs. Leigh had sat with her a while the night before. Mrs. Leigh had seemed tired and overwrought; no wonder, with Kadis doing so silly a thing as she had done. Today she was gone again—obviously to the mountain. Mr. Felsinger must be ill and her mother nursing him. Could that have been why Wilda Thorn had gone to his house that night? Had he been ill? . . . Why would they not tell her things? Could her mother indeed be nursing Mr. Felsinger? She who had always deplored Kadis' work in the mountains, could she be doing that work herself? . . . It seemed incredible to Kadis, yet when she pieced things together, the dark, fantastic puzzle of the last few days . . .

Wee started slightly under her hand, lifted his head. Suddenly he crept closer to Kadis' arm, thrusting his nose beneath the coverlet. A light knock sounded presently

"Did you ever nurse anybody?"

"Only Jack. Who's ailing?"

"Felsinger's been shot. He can't live. Aunt Adelaide has been with him during the day, and I at night. They've pulled off the strike at the mines and I've got to go. Kadis, it happens, is laid up. It's the night nursing I want you to take. Will you do it?"

"Why, of course," said Coral slowly. "Can't you find a trained nurse?"

"He has asked that no strangers come. It's the only request he's made. There'll be no actual work for you to do. Strangeland comes every day and we've had Lockridge from Washington. He was shot through the lung. They found the bullet; it grazed the heart. He's just—going out, and he knows it. He doesn't ask for anything; I wish to heaven he did. There's nothing we can do except make him comfortable while he lasts. You will only have to sit with him, give him a drink of water now and then. Shad Sprauss will come and sleep in the kitchen."

Coral spoke after a silence.

"I'll wager it was about that little Wilda Thorn."

Phil's eye darkened.

"It was not," he said, and rose.

"I'll come," decided Coral, though she reflected after he had gone that he might have been more cheerfully communicative.

Jasper came by that evening in Judge Hoxie's car and took Mrs. Valentine to the mountain as he went for Mrs. Leigh. Mrs. Leigh experienced some misgivings in leaving Coral in charge. Coral was not a stranger, however, and the night

nursing carried little or no responsibility. Mrs. Leigh explained to Coral that the broth which they gave the patient at intervals was kept warming in the kitchen, that the oil stove Phil had brought for the bedroom had been lately filled, that Jasper had brought in wood for the fire-place, and that a boy would arrive at dark and remain the night.

Alone, Coral laid off her wraps and stood for a moment beside the fire. Presently she went into the adjoining room. Here the dusk was lighted waveringly with the glow from the oil stove. Felsinger lay apparently in a light sleep. The loss of blood had left his face pallid. His thick red hair was swept back damply, blue veins stood out on his brow. His cheek bones looked high and sharp above the growth of dark beard. His hands that had seemed so fine and strong—There was something infinitely quiet about his hands.

Coral sat down, frightened a little by these changes. She had not meant to be frightened. That state of mind was not among her calculations in coming here. She would not be frightened. She would remember the last time she had seen Felsinger—in this cabin. With the thought a little smile lifted the corner of her mouth. Perhaps if he could have foreseen the aspects of their next meeting, he would not have been so strange and lofty that afternoon . . .

Again the little fright ran through her. He lay so still. Could he be already dead? . . .

She rose, went toward the door. The movement seemed to reach his consciousness. He stirred slightly, frowned.

Something of life remained then, enough, she hoped, to last the night. But she could not sit in this room with the oil stove. Since they knew he could not live, why had they

not removed him to the other room? But perhaps dying men did not object to the odor of oil stoves.

She started slightly, arrested in her soft movement toward the door. Felsinger was looking at her, a tranquil gaze, unearthly in that gaunt face.

"Do you want water?" asked Coral, and brought it since he did not answer.

He drank, looked at her again, closed his eyes.

"I am in the next room if you need me," she said.

In the living room she lighted the lamp, placed it so that its rays would fall into the bedroom when the door was opened. She closed the door now, satisfied that Felsinger had again fallen asleep. It had grown dark outside and she drew the clumsy blinds, making them fast.

She turned from the window to the table where stood the covered typewriter. The last time she was here this table had been littered with closely written paper. Now it was very orderly, a few books piled on it, some pencils and a pad. She lifted the cover of the typewriter—empty and very clean.

She stole over to the washstand from which she had seen him take the manuscript he had read that night. Stealthily she opened the drawer, then glanced toward the bedroom. He had always been so quiet, seeming to observe her while he kept himself concealed. It would not have surprised her to see him standing in the door.

Her eyes returned to the drawer.

Here, all was disorder—manuscripts, rolled and folded, carbon paper, blotters, half-written pages lying loose, letters . . .

Coral drew up a chair, then turned sharply, hearing a sound. It did not come from the bedroom and she had a sick moment until the kitchen door opened and a mountain boy shuffled into the room.

"I'm ailin'," he said wearily. "Howsomever, I'll stay t'night. I cain't come no mo', I reckon."

The boy disposed of and the kitchen door closed, Coral looked in at Felsinger. He still slept. She went back to the washstand and settling herself in the chair, began to go through the letters. They were all from editors or publishers and addressed to J. Felsinger.

> "If you would be content to let your heroine reform and be happy,"

wrote one, and another,

> "Why kill off the old lady? She seemed a right good sort to us."

"That must have been that 'Ma Jeanette' thing," mused Coral.

One letter had been registered and mentioned a cash enclosure, "according to your instructions." The editor would be interested in a serial if Mr. Felsinger could make it equally cheerful.

Coral replaced each letter as she had found it. Presently she came upon a batch of notes. The first was a fragment:

> "And if your eyes could see me where I stand,
> I think their darkness would grow darker still,
> Perhaps with sorrow and perhaps with scorn—
> I who have borne but ill
> The strange bright treasure of your faith . . ."

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Phil's eye darkened.

"It was not," he said, and rose.

"I'll come," decided Coral, though she reflected after he had gone that he might have been more cheerfully communicative.

Jasper came by that evening in Judge Hoxie's car and took Mrs. Valentine to the mountain as he went for Mrs. Leigh. Mrs. Leigh experienced some misgivings in leaving Coral in charge. Coral was not a stranger, however, and the night

nursing carried little or no responsibility. Mrs. Leigh explained to Coral that the broth which they gave the patient at intervals was kept warming in the kitchen, that the oil stove Phil had brought for the bedroom had been lately filled, that Jasper had brought in wood for the fire-place, and that a boy would arrive at dark and remain the night.

Alone, Coral laid off her wraps and stood for a moment beside the fire. Presently she went into the adjoining room. Here the dusk was lighted waveringly with the glow from the oil stove. Felsinger lay apparently in a light sleep. The loss of blood had left his face pallid. His thick red hair was swept back damply, blue veins stood out on his brow. His cheek bones looked high and sharp above the growth of dark beard. His hands that had seemed so fine and strong—There was something infinitely quiet about his hands.

Coral sat down, frightened a little by these changes. She had not meant to be frightened. That state of mind was not among her calculations in coming here. She would not be frightened. She would remember the last time she had seen Felsinger—in this cabin. With the thought a little smile lifted the corner of her mouth. Perhaps if he could have foreseen the aspects of their next meeting, he would not have been so strange and lofty that afternoon . . .

Again the little fright ran through her. He lay so still. Could he be already dead? . . .

She rose, went toward the door. The movement seemed to reach his consciousness. He stirred slightly, frowned.

Something of life remained then, enough, she hoped, to last the night. But she could not sit in this room with the oil stove. Since they knew he could not live, why had they

not removed him to the other room? But perhaps dying men did not object to the odor of oil stoves.

She started slightly, arrested in her soft movement toward the door. Felsinger was looking at her, a tranquil gaze, unearthly in that gaunt face.

"Do you want water?" asked Coral, and brought it since he did not answer.

He drank, looked at her again, closed his eyes.

"I am in the next room if you need me," she said.

In the living room she lighted the lamp, placed it so that its rays would fall into the bedroom when the door was opened. She closed the door now, satisfied that Felsinger had again fallen asleep. It had grown dark outside and she drew the clumsy blinds, making them fast.

She turned from the window to the table where stood the covered typewriter. The last time she was here this table had been littered with closely written paper. Now it was very orderly, a few books piled on it, some pencils and a pad. She lifted the cover of the typewriter—empty and very clean.

She stole over to the washstand from which she had seen him take the manuscript he had read that night. Stealthily she opened the drawer, then glanced toward the bedroom. He had always been so quiet, seeming to observe her while he kept himself concealed. It would not have surprised her to see him standing in the door.

Her eyes returned to the drawer.

Here, all was disorder—manuscripts, rolled and folded, carbon paper, blotters, half-written pages lying loose, letters . . .

Coral drew up a chair, then turned sharply, hearing a sound. It did not come from the bedroom and she had a sick moment until the kitchen door opened and a mountain boy shuffled into the room.

"I'm ailin'," he said wearily. "Howsomever, I'll stay t'night. I cain't come no mo', I reckon."

The boy disposed of and the kitchen door closed, Coral looked in at Felsinger. He still slept. She went back to the washstand and settling herself in the chair, began to go through the letters. They were all from editors or publishers and addressed to J. Felsinger.

"If you would be content to let your heroine reform and be happy,"

wrote one, and another,

"Why kill off the old lady? She seemed a right good sort to us."

"That must have been that 'Ma Jeanette' thing," mused Coral.

One letter had been registered and mentioned a cash enclosure, "according to your instructions." The editor would be interested in a serial if Mr. Felsinger could make it equally cheerful.

Coral replaced each letter as she had found it. Presently she came upon a batch of notes. The first was a fragment:

"And if your eyes could see me where I stand,
I think their darkness would grow darker still,
Perhaps with sorrow and perhaps with scorn—
I who have borne but ill
The strange bright treasure of your faith . . ."

Then there was a lady. She had eyes that pitied, eyes that at some vague time had seemed to place one a great way off but now drew one very close. And once, for a little while, a child sat in the chair and stared at him. She had a hood of bright hair and a round grave face. She seemed far away, even when she touched him.

He was certain of but one thing about these people; they were in some way associated with her whom he wished to see. He knew that he was going out even before the authoritative voice speaking in the next room had told one of these watchers so. Could one drift so swiftly down a strong current and be unaware? Once he had asked that she come. He could not recall to whom he had entrusted the message, but he hoped that they would bear it to her in time.

He turned his head on the pillow and looked through the window beside his bed, out into the dark. All day there had been a tapping like soft fingers against the pane. He saw now that they were not fingers, but wings. They were vast and white and came with a swift, relentless sweeping.

"Do you know what they are?" he asked, speaking to the empty chair. And some one rose from the shadows of the room and came toward him.

"It is the snow," said a voice. "It is snowing very hard tonight."

He looked up toward the voice, smiled suddenly and tried to lift a hand.

"They told you," he said.

He wanted to point to the empty chair, but his hand would not obey him. She stood beside him for a moment, then she drew the chair close and sat down. The room was

no lighter than it had ever been, but he seemed to see her more clearly than he had seen the others. The dark serge dress that he remembered fell in soft folds. Her eyes, shadowy and blue,—Della Robbia blue, he had always called them—dwelt on him gently. Their light seemed to flow through him. But her face was whiter than he remembered it. Her hair looked darker, more cloud-like against that whiteness . . . Could it be that she was not real? He had seen so many things that they had told him were not real.

"If I might touch you—" he said.

She drew closer, laid her hand on his. He closed his eyes.

"I am glad you came," he whispered. "I wanted to ask you something."

But there was no need of haste now. This light and warmth she brought—how could he go while they remained beside him? At length he said,

"Do you think we come back? . . . That is what I wanted to ask you."

She did not answer him, and presently he opened his eyes.

"There are snarls," he explained. "Things that ought to be done—and undone."

"Is it anything that I can straighten?" she asked.

"No. Then you don't think we come back?"

She was silent. How could she reply? She had sat by the dying many times, had answered their questions—but their questions had not been like this.

"You think that when we die—we die," he said.

"We never die," she answered. "Our bodies have died already—many times, even in this little life here. Yours is not the same body you had twenty years ago, or even ten.

Those bodies have disappeared—died. Death and resurrection go on all our lives, but ourselves remain."

"And do we remember?"

"How can I know? I know that there is so much I have already forgotten, people and things and happenings that I have not missed. Perhaps I remember them without knowing it. Perhaps they have gone to build something inside me. I am sure that what we have loved we remember."

"Yes . . . I should not want to forget that."

He spoke again after a pause.

"I should like to come back in the body. I should like to feel that now—tonight—there are people waiting in some dim room for me to be born. I should like to feel that I shall yet undo—mend—restore."

He lay with closed eyes. Again his hand stirred.

"If you will reach beneath my pillow—There is something there—."

"Not now. I have taken it out. It is behind the loose stone in the chimney. It is safer there."

"That is true. Does any one know?"

"No one knows it is there."

"I am glad. It is for you—you and the little school."

Presently she asked,

"Is it among the things you would—undo?"

Again he closed his eyes.

"It will have its own death and resurrection in the little school."

The silence grew. He had asked his question and given his message. Now he lay quite still, his eyes closed, the little whimsical smile beginning to creep about his mouth.

The wavering light on the ceiling cast a glow over his face. The snow beat on the window.

Kadis lifted her hand gently and listened. There had sounded something like a knock on one of the doors of the living room. Perhaps it was Shad Sprauss arriving at this hour. Her mother, reluctant to leave at best, would never have gone except that Shad was due to come at eight, but Shad for some reason had not appeared. The knock did not sound again, but an outer door opened and closed, letting in a current of cold air.

Kadis stole into the living room to see Wilda Thorn standing beside the rear door. She wore a bright red cloak trimmed in fur. A swirl of snow lay about her feet. Snow was on her shoulders and the dark angora scarf about her hair. She stood watching Kadis, her eyes dark and dilated.

"I saw you come this evenin'," she said when Kadis had closed the bedroom door and come over to her. "I wanted to tell you—he's not gone?" she broke off. Then, "I'm—glad. I wanted you to know—'fore he goes."

Kadis looked at her, wondering at a love so casual. She had thought that Wilda had come to watch with her, but Wilda made no move toward the bedroom.

"I wanted you to know that he—did it fer you—and I couldn't a-stopped him. I wanted you to know—both those things."

Kadis stood silent. What was it that had been done for her? What of all this might she claim as hers?

"I thought at first," whispered Wilda as Kadis came closer still, "I thought I might a-stopped him. I thought I was to blame maybe, 'cause I told him—I told him it was all his

fault fer a-bringin' Phil. I wouldn't a-done it but—I thought he couldn't be kilt. I thought he couldn't. But the bullet went in. It went in . . ."

"Wilda, what is it? What are you saying?" Kadis clasped the girl's hands in hers. "Now tell me."

"Anyhow," Wilda spoke more quietly, "anyhow I couldn't a-stopped him, 'cause he did it fer you. . . . They didn't tell you that, did they? They didn't know."

"They've told me almost nothing. What was it he did for me?"

"What he *did*." Wilda caught back her hands, speaking breathlessly. "Pappy was a-layin' fer Phil. Mr. Felsinger knew he was there; I told him. I could see him a-hidin' in the dogwood and I might' near shot him. I had a bead on him and if the moon hadn't come out bright—

"You was lyin' there dumb-like, wrapped in his coat. The doctor had just gone. Mr. Felsinger come over to me and took the rifle and told me 'bout the thing I was to give you, and gave it to me fer you, and made me promise—He made me promise to do what was right. He said you and Phil belonged to each other and Phil must be saved—fer you. And then he went out."

"He went out to get the officers," said Kadis, able at last to catch some gleam of reason in Wilda's words.

"That's what he said—but he didn't know Pap wasn't on parole. I thought he knew. I thought he knew—ever' thing. Now I know he didn't know that. He couldn't have. But he did know—cause I told him—that they was a-watchin' ever'thing; that they likely saw me when I come to tell him Pap was here. They didn't know why I come 'cause

they didn't know I knew. But he must a-known they was watchin' the house after that and saw him when he went out the first time and come back a-bringin' you—up the steep. And when he went again they could calculate it was to bring the doctor, and when Phil and the doctor come he was bound to a-known he couldn't go again without them knowin' it was to get the law and a-gettin' him first. Then they would get Phil. His only chance was that maybe they didn't think they'd been seen; maybe they thought we didn't know.

"But when he went out they shot him and then they went away. You see he had on Phil's coat. He went out through the kitchen and he had on Phil's gray coat. . . . I didn't know that," she added quickly as Kadis drew back from her. "You were wearin' his own big coat—but it wasn't that. He went to town fer the doctor without any overcoat. He knew what he was doin'. He wanted 'em to get him, thinking it was Phil—and go away. He wanted it—fer you.

"I can't keep my promise though," she added swiftly. "He told me to give you the little bag—the wallet—if—if anything happened. When they told me he wasn't kilt I slipped in and gave it back to him. He didn't remember. He just—took it. But I can't keep—the promise. I don't know if I'll ever get a chance to tell you, but maybe some day you'll know—why. I got to go now."

Then as Kadis stood motionless looking toward the bedroom,

"You'll—forgive me? If I don't get another chance to ask you—you'll forgive me?"

Kadis' eyes came back to her.

"Forgive? . . . Forgive you?"

"You don't—understand," whispered Wilda. "But maybe you'll remember I—asked you."

She wrenched the door open and went out.

Kadis groped her way to the bedroom, knelt down by the bed. Sobs rose, struggling like something alive inside her breast. She fought them back, but the tears overran her eyelids. She bowed her face on the bed.

"Is it for me?" asked Felsinger softly.

She had thought that he was asleep.

"Why did you do it?" she cried. "Why did you do what you did? It was foolish—it was waste—"

"No. I merely spent what I had not earned. Always I have been spending what I have not earned. I spent my life at last, and bought your tears. I did not waste it. Perhaps I bought your happiness."

She shook her head.

"Let me think so," he said. "It somehow wipes out all the rest. Do you remember what you said about 'Ma Jeanette?' 'Surely going like that wiped out everything else.' To have gone, as I might have gone, idly and with no reason except defeat, that would have been waste, perhaps. And then again,—where is your sense of humor? Can't you see I played a little joke on them? They pride themselves on their markmanship, on never hitting the wrong man—"

"If you will live—" whispered Kadis.

"No. If I were to live I should have no right to your tears. If you gave them to me I should have to go away. And so—how much better it is that I am going where there is no

returning, at least no returning that can do you harm. . . . You remember I came back that other time."

"Why did you come back?"

"Surely you know. Surely you know that there was life nowhere else. Whatever waited me here, this was my place, —so long as I did not wrong you by asking the gift of your— tears."

The smile flickered about his mouth but his eyes met hers, dark and filled with a bright earth-hunger that drew her heart with intolerable pain. She felt his hand move to her wrist. Her face bent over his. Their lips met. It was as if she gave her life to him. When he went on his long journey he could not leave her here. An infinite peace came to her, a clear courage that seemed born of his.

His hand moved down her wrist, rested on hers. The little flickering smile began to settle about his mouth. He closed his eyes.

"On the shelf in the other room," he said, "there is a book. I used to read it when I first came, during the long rains. There was nothing else to read. Some of it took me back— If you will bring it here—I think I could march better to your voice."

There was no book on the shelf except the old Felsinger Bible. Kadis returned with it, lighted the candle and placed it close, sitting so as to shade his face from the light. She opened the Bible across her knees and read where her eye fell, a passage that had been marked:

"Then I went down to the potter's house and behold he wrought a work on the wheels.

"And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it . . ."

It was not one of the passages of comfort. Kadis turned to the Psalms. Felsinger's voice came softly.

"Another vessel. I've wondered over that. Is it the potter's house I'm bound for—to be made over? The marred vessel—back to the wheel—round and round—over and over . . ."

"He that dwelleth," began Kadis. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High—"

"Ah, that one! It kept my mother's feet. She used to read it to me at night—before she left me in the dark. It's good to march by. And the secret place—Perhaps that is somewhere near the potter's house. Perhaps I shall find them both . . ."

He shall cover thee," read Kadis, "He shall cover thee with his feathers . . . and under his wings shalt thou trust . . ."

Dawn came at last. The black earth turned to gray, to white, began to throb again. In the little bedroom there was no movement with the returning light. Even Kadis, kneeling beside the bed, did not stir. She did not stir except to release the hand she held. It had grown cold and rigid in her clasp. He had gone without her, yet she had not released him—until now.

Suddenly all life stopped within her. The hand she had released had stirred. Slowly—very slowly, it lifted and lay upon her hair. She raised her face. In the gray light Fel-

singer's eyes met hers, strange and shining and with something in their depths that awed her into calm.

"I have come back," he said.

XIX

When the snow melts in the mountain country every ridge and "rabbit-path" becomes a headlong stream. Dazzling ledges of rock suddenly slough their whiteness to drop it, whispering and shattering, into the whiteness below. Dark closeted wood-things creep out again, sniffing and scurrying; sparrows, who have been on hand all the while, chirp their upbraiding at this intrusion. The trees stretch their black arms, loosing the snow from their shoulders, remembering the sap in their roots. The old earth laughs softly in her sleep and bares her wet brown body to the sun.

At such moments, though the wind may be climbing the sky with another snow-fall, there is a flashing return of spring, a bright peep through the window as if she meant to make sure we have not forgotten or lost faith.

During the early days of Felsinger's convalescence Mrs. Leigh sat often in the cabin, listening to that new murmur amid the rocks, that soft crash from eaves and boughs. Felsinger had insisted that with Shad's return to do the cooking and his own growing success in rising from his chair and moving across the room, he needed no further aid. But Mrs. Leigh and Kadis came and went.

At the end of a week Kadis crossed over to the Thorns' meaning to ask Wilda to take her place for a day. Judge Hoxie was due to arrive from Florida and it was the family's custom to assemble on such occasions.

Wilda was not there. Mrs. Thorn sat by the hearth, her black sunbonnet pulled down around her face. She had the appearance of having been sitting there for days. Surrey came in and curled on the floor in a corner, his eyes on Kadis.

"I dunno where Wildy is," Mrs. Thorn said apathetically. Her hand moved to the empty snuff box beside her, laid it down again. "I reckon ye know she done left here last Sat'dy night, a week ago termorry."

"Saturday night—the night of the big snow?" Kadis exclaimed. And as Mrs. Thorn made no reply. "I was with Mr. Felsinger that night," she added. "I saw Wilda for a few minutes—"

"Then you was the last one what seed her alive—lessen she got there."

"Unless she got where?"

Mrs. Thorn lapsed into silence. Presently she began to speak, fitfully, irrelevantly, shifting her knees to and fro.

"Ben spoke true—he done said the truth. Better she was dead—better she's done lyin' on the road—Helt my head up—done helt my head up when her pappy was jailed—he hed a right ter hev a still. Now he's done kilt avengin' of his own. Hit was true—what Ben done said. Bad benefit'll come to her, a-usin' of the witch-woman's name in her lies, a-sayin' she done went ter Hoodoo Nan 'cause I was a-drappin' things, a-sayin' she was lost. She's done lost now—the witch-woman's done got her vengeance. Five of 'em buried on the hill up tha' . . . Better she's a-lyin' with em. When the snow's done melted they'll find her—a-lyin' tha' with the rest. Better so . . . Hit's better so. I ain't a-cryin'—and I ain't a-holdin' my head up—no mo'."

Kadis could make little of her mutterings. That Wilda had ventured out the night of the snow, this much she knew. If she had attempted to go far it was likely that the lot her mother counted a better one had befallen her. Six nights ago she had started and they had not heard of her, had not even sought for her . . .

Kadis went out concerned less with Mrs. Thorn's apathy than with the immediate necessity of organizing a search for Wilda. Swift steps sounded behind her as she crossed the clearing, and she turned to see Surrey running toward her.

"I know where she went," he whispered. "She went ter Cuthbert—leastways, she started fer Cuthbert."

Kadis' heart stopped.

"Not at midnight, Surrey!"

Surrey nodded.

"I know, 'cause she told me. Her and me sleeps 'longside. She kissed me good-bye and told me not to worry—'cause she was a-goin' ter Cuthbert."

Kadis caught his hand, drawing him with her through the pines. Her heart began to move again. Surrey did not know. Ben Cotrell with his evil imaginings had turned Wilda's mother against her, had brought her father home to his death, and Wilda, unjustly blamed, had hidden herself at a neighbor's until the evil days should pass, had hidden herself even from Surrey.

"Why would she go to Cuthbert—and at night?" she asked, chiefly to soothe the child.

He answered doggedly,

" 'Cause mammy said it was true—what Ben done told. 'Cause mammy shook her and tore her clothes and beat her

head agin the wall. Lots o' times Wildy went at night and I didn't know nothin'. I done woke up and she'd be gone. But this time she done kissed me and told me ef she staid she'd tell—she'd tell the secret—and she mustn't tell."

Kadis stopped in the path. With a little movement of the hand she pushed Surrey from her and he ran back, toward the house. She stood still then, striving to grasp the fact that Wilda had indeed been in trouble, had been fleeing that night, facing—perhaps desiring—death in the snow. Who had shared her secret? If she could know that, thought Kadis, she might determine in which way Wilda had gone. Could it indeed have been to Cuthbert? . . . She must get word to Phil to search for her there . . . But then Phil would be home today.

Kadis left Shad Sprauss with Felsinger and rode home quickly, meaning to despatch all Innessburg on the search for Wilda. Shad, it was apparent, knew little of Wilda's disappearance. Kadis cautioned him to say nothing to Felsinger.

She was still at the telephone when Phil, walking up from the station, came in upon her. Something in his voice as he greeted her caused her to turn and look at him. Something in his face held her eyes. Often in the last year she had seen him wear that look, a look half entreating, half defiant. Yet now she had a strange sense that he wore it for the last time.

"Did you want to see me?" she asked, knowing in some way that he had come for that, rather than to greet his father. He answered that he did and after a moment turned toward the library. But Letty was in there, polishing against Judge Hoxie's return and Kadis led him into the dining

room wondering if one of the old heart-breaking discussions awaited them. Well, she would tell him the truth—as best she could.

They sat down at the familiar old table with all the portraits looking down on them, and Kadis watching Phil's face knew that it was not one of the old discussions now. What it was she could not think, but somewhere back in her mind kept knocking the words, "It is the last time—the last time . . . "

Phil sat staring ahead of him—staring . . .

Kadis laid her hand on his arm.

"What have you done, Phil?" she asked.

And then he told her, blurted out his story, laid it before her all in a heap. There was no reparation he could make, he said. He could only ask forgiveness—and help.

Kadis' hand lifted slowly from his arm.

"You!" she whispered. "Wilda . . . You!"

Phil leaned toward her, the entreaty covering all the defiance in his eyes.

He had loved Wilda so long—at least it seemed so long, from the minute he had seen her. It was one of those things—we can't explain them. They had been meeting at odd times ever since he had helped Kadis in the school. But Wilda was always frightened for him—always wretched in a way—and so he had built a little house in the cove for them to meet in; it was burned now . . .

Kadis closed her eyes. The little house in the cove with its thronging ghosts . . .

"Not you, Phil! . . . Not you!"

And then a red fire swept through her as she thought of

Wilda faring in the night and snow to Cuthbert, of Mrs. Thorn's bowed head . . . Not Phil! . . . Not Phil! . . .

Phil's hand rested suddenly on hers.

Didn't she understand? Wilda and he had been married since that night last June—the night of Mrs. Hatch's picnic. Cotrell had discovered their meetings and Phil had feared for Wilda's safety. He had taken her to Cuthbert and married her, had begged her to stay with him there, but she had feared that Cotrell would follow and find her. He had not wanted his father to know—had sworn Wilda to secrecy. That was his greatest wrong—except the wrong he had done to Kadis. It would all end now. He would bring Wilda here—to his home. Would Kadis—he was a coward to ask it—would Kadis talk with his father—prepare him?

Kadis did not speak at once. There had come to her a relief so full, so many-sided, that she could grasp it only by degrees. And with that relief came dawning the memory of Wilda as she had stood that night with her dark dilated eyes, begging for forgiveness . . .

"Then Wilda reached Cuthbert after all?" she asked at last.

"No," Phil answered. "She is here. She would never come to me."

Again the enwrapping flame. Kadis rose. She strove to speak, but it seemed the only words she could think of were, "It is the last time—the last time . . ."

But at last she told him.

Phil's searching did not stop with night-fall. At Spruce Cliff, a point midway between Cuthbert and Little Glory,

the others turned back, maintaining that no human being could have fared further on the night of the storm. But Phil pressed on, knowing what agile feet she had had, what an urgent little will. He knew too that she had been accustomed to take the cuts across instead of following the road, and so he climbed slippery steeps and went down into hollows and byways, soft with melting snow. She could not have seen her way that night, but she might have felt it, so far as it was familiar, then coming to Spruce Cliff—he was not certain that she had ever been alone beyond Spruce Cliff—she would have kept to the road, following the telegraph poles, climbing, struggling against wind and snow. . . .

Kadis had said that she wore a red cloak that night—the little cloak he had brought her once along with a bracelet and a book. Constantly as he rode he watched for that glow of dull scarlet tangled in a thicket or caught against a tree. Just beyond Spruce Cliff he met the men he had ordered out from Cuthbert. They had kept to the road and had found nothing. They turned and he rode back with them. There was a bright moon. Perhaps he could see what they had not seen.

Toward midnight he fared again toward home, over the road he had taken so often to meet with Wilda in Lost Cove, to watch for her from the bridge as she came through the dark, a silent hurrying figure, invisible to all others, but as luminous to his eyes as if she had been shod with stars. Here at this curve he had almost run over her as she stood that summer evening in the dusk; she had climbed into the car beside him . . .

He halted sharply, unbelievingly. From somewhere there

place. It was the look of one who has fallen from a great height and is unhurt—even relieved. Or was it the look of one who has climbed suddenly out of great depths and is transfigured? Kadis had always been puzzling, but in her own way Coral liked her, and did not wish to see her wrecked.

"We just can't play fast and loose with men," she confided with something very close to sympathy, "even though they are kinfolks. It was—awful, but don't do anything rash. Wait."

Kadis rode toward Little Glory, smiling over Coral's parting words. It was true about Phil, thank God. She would not soon forget that home-coming while she and her mother watched. Judge Hoxie had arrived on the midnight train which was an hour late. He had reached the house only a few minutes before Phil; they had told him nothing. Then, as they stood together in the hall, the front door had opened and the light had fallen on Wilda in her red cloak, on Phil beside her, his head lifted, his eyes meeting his father's. It was a look washed clean of fear by the greater fear of the hours before.

And then when revelations came Kadis who waited ready to intercede, to take the blame, if blame there was, stood silent. In her uncle's look as he turned to her she read that intercession was about to come from him, intercession to her—for Phil. She felt herself no part of the reconciliation that must follow, but crept upstairs with [illegible] eyes and beating heart.

What lay before her now? She was [illegible] from the ties that had held her fro[illegible] known that she was b[illegible]nd; some one [illegible]

window of a cabin, a little lean-to cabin at the foot of old Nebo. His guide stood crouching cat-like in the door. In the room beyond her, close to the flickering candle, hung a bright red cloak.

Coral dropped in at Roslyn on Saturday morning. Three days before she had received a message from Maury Prescott, announcing that he was on his way to Innessburg and instructing her to have the man Felsinger watched. Coral had anticipated this last advice, for she did not trust either Mrs. Leigh or Kadis when it came to Felsinger. Kadis was capable of warning him and disposing of the necklace. Why had she ever acquainted Kadis with her suspicions? She would certainly never have done so if Strangeland had not assured her that Felsinger could not recover. Coral had a distinct feeling that Strangeland had tricked her.

Kadis reassured her as to the whereabouts of the necklace. She had not warned Felsinger.

Coral gave her an incredulous look, but Kadis' eyes were frank and clear.

"You think I am mistaken," said Coral. "Oh Kadis, be careful!"

They were sitting on the veranda steps. It was rarely warm for January, as if the winter had spent its reserves in that fearful snow. Kadis had been standing in the drive, waiting for Beauregard to be brought when Coral came. She was late in getting off this morning for none of the household had slept the night before.

"It's true then about Phil," added Coral.

There was something about Kadis that she could not

back to his writing and felt as she sometimes did in March when the first leaf puts out.

"But I hope you haven't cooked your breakfast," she said. "When you do that—my job's gone. Spring is all very well, but don't push into mid-summer when all signs begin to point toward fall."

He had not cooked his breakfast. She laid off her things and went into the kitchen. Presently she brought in his tray, the morning's surprise being a jar of cherry marmalade and an hydrangea from Roslyn's greenhouses. Her hands were trembling a little and she pressed them together, as she sat down opposite him, her eyes shining. She noticed that he drew his chair to the table, not waiting for her to help him. They sat a moment in silence and then she told her news.

"Wilda Thorn has been lost—and found," she said.

He looked up—waiting.

"It was the night of the terrible snow. She had started to Cuthbert and got lost. She stumbled into Hoodoo Nan's. Nan took a hand in things and kept her there. Wilda says Nan cast a spell over her—says that when she became conscious she was blind."

"She had started for Cuthbert?" repeated Felsinger.

"To find Phil. . . . They were married last June."

He looked at her.

"Have you known this long?" he asked.

"That they were married? No. Phil and I have been engaged since we were children, but it was Wilda he loved. I am glad they found each other."

He said no more. When he had eaten she carried out the

tray, tidied the kitchen and returned. He seemed not to hear her then, but sat looking out into the sunshine. She came near him, drew the table from before him, brought the pad and laid it on his knee. He did not turn his head but his hand lifted and caught hers.

She stood very still.

"Was it only Phil?" she asked.

He was silent. After a moment he shook his head.

"But nothing else matters," she said.

He smiled. It was the smile she had seen so often, droll, bitter, and a little sad; the smile of one who plays the game because he has brought it on himself.

She knelt down by his chair.

"Nothing else matters," she said bravely. "And even that would not matter—now. I would have gone with you—out into the dark—if I could. But you didn't go, and now—now you must stay—with me."

The smile went from his eyes as they met hers.

"I love you," he said.

"Then you will stay."

He did not answer, lifting her hand to his lips.

"You will stay—always. We will face everything—together."

A look of unbelieving came into his eyes.

"Would you come to me, not knowing what I have to face?"

Her eyes did not waver.

"We never know," she said.

"But if I tell you that it might be—the worst."

'Nothing could be worse than to have you face it—alone.

And I should know—whatever the world might say—I should know that you are innocent."

She felt the clasp of his hand tighten and then relax. Something within his eyes seemed to withdraw from her.

"I am not innocent," he said.

A sharp pang went through her, a helpless sense of reaching out to destroy the words, to make them unsaid. But the pain of his relaxing hand was greater.

"I must be with you," she said.

With the words something hard seemed to melt in her breast, to flow like a bright baptism through all her veins. His hands moved to her shoulders. He held her and looked into her face. She thought she saw the shining of tears within his eyes and closed her own.

It was afternoon when she came to go. Shad Sprauss was to return at five, prepare Felsinger's supper and remain during the night. Kadis would come again early the next morning—and then she would know. She would know all that lay back of him, all the tangle that they were to unwind together. He had not said that she might help him. He had said only,

"Tomorrow. Let me have today."

Kadis was not afraid of that tomorrow. When he had answered, "I am not innocent," some tower built of every faith she knew had seemed to fall. Magically it lifted itself again. What he had done, was it a part of him—as she knew him? Did she not know him—as he was?

Whatever he had done they would undo together—mend—restore. They would clear the ground and then they would

build—together. She had been shaped to this end, and all the false deposit of the years, striving to encrust her heart against it had been washed away, leaving her free.

She was not afraid of tomorrow.

Felsinger watched her ride away, watched her as far as he could see her. He had risen and moved out upon the porch. As she entered the woods she waved her hand, and he waved back. The bare trees did not hide her, but presently came the intervening shoulder of a hill . . .

Slowly he made his way back into the room.

He stood for an instant looking at the loose stone in the center of the chimney. Presently he thrust it more securely into place. Then he went into the bedroom and kneeling drew from beneath the bed, the old pigskin bag. One by one he gathered his scattered belongings and dropped them within. The task was slow but strength seemed to revive in him as he moved about.

Shad Sprauss appeared at five o'clock and Felsinger sent him home again, saying that he would not need him. When dark came he prepared his supper. Afterwards he lay down on the couch until close to midnight. He rose then, dressed himself and, lighting the lamp, began to write.

XX

"Kadis," he wrote.

"This is the last story I shall write for you. It will also be the hardest, because it is the truth. I think I could never write it if you had not said what you said this morning, 'I must be with you.'

"Is it true that there is such a thing in the world? . . . Having seen the light, I must walk by it.

"I have been a waster—always, as I told you. They thought the war would change me. The war! It was an orgy of mud and blood. I was a savage after it, a savage hungry for nothing but peace and pleasure and beauty.

"When I came home my father and brother greeted me as one already redeemed. I had had such miraculous escapes that I must be preserved for some good end, they thought. For some good end!

"My brother had staid home through it all; he was needed by the business. He had always condescended to me because he is so good. He is younger than I, but his goodness—there is a great maturity in that.

"Now he seemed younger than I, indeed—younger than his own years, even. He looked up to me. I made up my mind to seem redeemed. It was the closest to desiring goodness that I had ever come. I wanted peace of all things and from the past I knew that this would be the simplest way of attaining it. I went into the office under Fred. He was different in the office—something of the autocrat again. But my father was watching me. Advancement would have come.

"Then all at once I found what I had been searching for—beauty, and with it, love.

"How can I write of this? But it is right that you should know—for you must understand.

"She was different from you, as Lilith was different from Eve. She was not made of the fibre closest to my heart—but I could not know this then. She was a dark and vivid

storm that troubled the current of my senses. It is with you I would stay, Kadis—always, as you said. Yet it was you who brought the light, and I must go back.

"I met her in her own house. She had lived in the town for years but I had never seen her. I had heard of her as a sad and beautiful woman, neglected by a husband who would not allow her a divorce. My closest friend had spoken to me of her. He and I were together in France. He had known her well—had loved her. After I knew her it seemed to me in looking back that he had spoken of her with a certain lightness. This feeling on my part estranged us and we met seldom, chiefly in her house. He still went there now and then, though he no longer cared for her. He told us one night that he was shortly to be married.

"That she, too, no longer cared was evidenced by the dinner she gave the bride-to-be, a sumptuous affair to which she had begged me to come. I did not want to go. It was not easy for me to sit with this man at her table. She knew nothing of my antipathy. She would not have understood my refusal. We think we have impulses—motives. They are footsteps merely to the potter's house. Sometimes it is a devious trail.

"I think she never looked so lovely as that night, so resplendent. It is seldom that I notice women's clothes. (Yours, Kadis, I have always seen, and I think I remember best the red tam, that and the white dress of the night in the garden.) That evening, I recall, she had on black. It was of lace and tulle and her arms were like old ivory—she is very dark. There were rubies at her throat and wrists, regal

things and she wore them like a queen. Her hair was smooth and glistening, like a black satin cap.

"The bride-to-be sat on her right and I on the right of the bride. She was blonde and pink, and now and then her gayety seemed hysterical. My friend sat opposite her. He was drinking too much; I knew what he could stand. His bride watched him. Apparently she knew, too. But I could not tell which she feared the more, the wine or her hostess.

"It was a relief to me when the ladies withdrew. The bleared look that my friend had bent on his hostess was now transferred to me.

"The other men were talking together. My father was saying something about Poland. Dr. Morell and he were arguing, my father earnestly, Dr. Morell with a quiet detachment. It is odd how those things stay. From the drawing room I could hear our hostess playing on the harp, a little thing of Saint-Saëns' that she had played often for me alone. The portieres were divided and by turning my head I could see her, her black dress, her dark uplifted head, the gold harp, her ivory arms. . . . My friend could watch her without moving. His bleared eyes rested on her, then returned to me.

"Presently while the others talked he rose from his seat, came around and bent over me. He spoke softly, unevenly. . . .

"I did not know when I struck him. I remember that he made an effort to catch himself by his bride's empty chair and that it fell with him. He moved once, then he lay very still and something dark oozed slowly from beside his head

and along the floor. He had fallen beside the fireplace and his head had struck the spiked knob of the brass railing that ran around the hearth.

"I know only that I was pushed back from him, that looking up through a red haze, I saw her face in the doorway, her black body silhouetted against the bright gowns of the other women. I remember the terror in her eyes.

"After a time I was in a dim room upstairs with two men, one was my father.

" 'You fool,' he said. 'Were you drunk?'

"The other man went out. Presently he returned and opening the door said to us,

" 'Morell has made an examination. He died almost instantly.' "

"My father went down stairs. I stood alone by the window. A cab stopped at the gate. Two men got out. There was a strange pain in my right hand. I could not clench the fingers without feeling it. I cannot now.

"Suddenly I turned around. A door had closed softly in the room. It was not the door the men had gone out by. Now in the dimness I heard some one move . . ."

The paragraph had begun a new page. He stopped, crumpled the paper in his hand and began again.

"The portieres at the back of the room concealed a door. This door, as I discovered shortly, led down a stair. I found myself presently out in the night. A car stood nearby. The chauffeur I knew and I said to him, 'Drive me home.'

"I knew that I must move quickly, that I had not time to change my clothes. In my brother's room was his satchel,

packed and ready for an early train. There was money in my clothes and in his. I caught up the bag—Fred was asleep—turned up the collar of my overcoat and, getting into the car again, caught a train a mile down the track at a crossing.

"A few stations below I took another train going in an opposite direction. I bought no ticket but in this chequered fashion I rode three days and nights. This brought me to Innessburg. I had not intended to stop here. I think I meant to keep going in some direction. My money had given out and I stopped to get work—day labor preferably so as not to be thrown with those of my own kind—and to go on when I had enough.

"I spent my last cent for a sandwich and walked out to Colfax Valley where I had been told the men were clearing. There was no one at work, however, for it was a holiday, so I climbed the steps of Little Glory meaning to ask a night's lodging in a mountain cabin. This was the cabin I found. Next day I got work in the valley.

"I will not describe the days that followed, the fear that came to me with every footstep, every curious glance from the rare passer-by. I did not know these fears when I was at work. They came when I reached my cabin at dusk and especially after the long rains began when all work stopped. For a long time I would not light my candle, then the thing on my hearth became an intolerable companion in the dark and I made a light. The light never dissipated the thing. Still it remained beside the hearth, lying as he lay that night, the dark stain moving beside his head . . . Still I

saw it, I who had killed with the best a year before and slept in red trenches like a child in bed. . . .

"You said one night that this mark was a noon mark and perhaps it was . . .

"Then after the long rains—you came. That day you gave me my name and told me that I wore the badge of the Hessians. It was a strange thing to be told. It was as if you said I bore the mark of Cain.

"But my badge is as old as the badge of the Hessians. It dates from the year that a lad from Glasgow crossed the North Channel and won a colleen of Ballyshannon to fare with her to America. They both, I understand, wore that badge. And since then one in every generation . . .

"I thought it a very convenient property when Phil stopped one night and explained it to me. I chuckled a little over it that night—real laughter,—before I went inside.

"From you I learned, too, that the owner of the cabin was not likely to come upon me and regard me as either squatter or tenant. I began straightway to build a porch for my own comfort and to pay Jerry Felsinger if he should return after I had gone. Many a night I have thought I heard him opening the door and I have made ready to rise and direct his attention to the porch.

"Something more you gave me, too—a profession. I had written before, skits for the local paper, plays at college, even a poem or two, enough to show that I could command words—and waste them. I might have attempted painting instead if the tools had been accessible. I knew only that I

must have a reason for the solitude I had sought. And then you listened as I read! No one except my mother had ever done that for me.

"I think you know the rest. What you cannot know is the hatred of the hiding, the trips to town after dark, the fear in crowds of any kind—even that night at Roslyn under my mask; the fear to open a paper, however old, lest I come upon some account of my flight, some mention of her . . .

"Then gradually, even here in the shadow, new life began to grow in me. Things dormant began to waken. Useless things began to make themselves used. There were times even when I forgot—not at night; it came back at night—but there were days when I forgot so far as to go into the village before dark, days when I forgot that I could not love you and let myself go. Not when I was with you, Kadis. There was something in your eyes that helped me to remember. Not then—except once. That last night—the night you knelt beside me—I did not forget. That was not forgetfulness.

"And now I am going back. I have known from the outset that I should be cleared. But whatever the outcome, I must go. And I shall not return. To go back is bondage. I cannot explain this to you.

"Whatever comes, know that I love you—you alone. To find the potter's house is not necessarily to find heaven, I guess . . .

"I am enclosing a cheque—the cheque for my serial. It is made out to 'bearer' as you will observe. I had kept it to pay my doctors but I learn that they are paid. I leave

it with you therefore for Little Glory School. It is endowed now.

" 'He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust. . . . ' "

The lamp at his side began to gutter, went out. In the dark he scrawled "good-bye" somewhere low on the last page. He folded the letter, inserted the cheque, drew an envelop from beneath the typewriter and wrote her name across it.

His eyes moved to the hearth. There was nothing there. For the first time, looking at the hearth in the dark, he saw nothing there.

He knew where a stub of candle lay but he did not light it. In the dark he threw some ashes on the open fire, and taking up the bag, went out.

Very slowly he went down the steep, holding to the projecting roots and branches. In the mail box he dropped the letter that Kadis might find it in the morning when she came.

The night was mild and moist like spring. There was no need that he walk rapidly. The train he would take did not leave until nearly dawn. He had three hours in which to make the walk, an hour for each mile. He could stop now and then and rest.

As he walked, two men riding single file with lighted lanterns swung to their saddles, approached the Felsinger cabin from the direction of Wunderschoen. At sight of the darkened windows the first one said,

"He's most likely asleep by now. But there's maybe somebody with him. Best to knock."

They alighted quietly and knocked. In the silence that followed they lifted the latch and went in. The first one struck a match, lighting up his swarthy face and ferret-like eyes, his heavy moustache like a stage sleuth's. He drew out his flash,

"Bed empty," he observed, looking into the adjoining room. "I've watched this joint every second till I met you at the curve a minute ago. Let's look in the kitchen."

"He can't be far," he added when he came back. "He's in no fix fer sprintin', and he was here ten minutes ago—writin'. I'll go out and look 'round a spell."

The other man took a chair beside the hearth. He was tired and plainly annoyed. A sick rat in a trap and they had allowed it to escape.

"Never mind a light," he said, as the other took up the lamp and found it empty. "Leave it dark. He may come in."

The first man went out. He walked around the cabin and across the clearing to find the Thorn cabin also dark. He retraced his steps, mounted his horse and rode down the incline, his lantern throwing a pale arc of light before his steps.

At the entrance to Lafayette Pike he came flush upon a man carrying a satchel. The man walked slowly and was coming toward the mountain. The rider passed him, returning his nod.

It was undoubtedly the man who called himself Jerry Felsinger. The rider had not watched him five days for nothing.

But the man who called himself Jerry Felsinger had forgotten something, and in passing the rider, had come

near asking the loan of his horse that he might go up the steep without an unforeseen expenditure of energy. He decided however that by leaving his bag at the foot of the steps, he would save himself sufficiently. There was nothing of value in the bag even if it should be stolen. The only thing of value in his possession was the thing he had left behind. He wondered a little that he could have forgotten it.

A dizziness went with him as he crossed the path to the cabin and drew the latch. It was very dark in here and still warm. There was a feeling of some one or of something in the room, but he had had that feeling before—always at night.

He went directly to the chimney, fingering the stones above the mantel. He had thought he knew the exact location of this loose stone, and so he did by sight. He had thrust it back too securely this afternoon. He would need the candle.

He crossed the room, lighted the candle. Then he stood very still.

On the road to town he had told himself that he had been healed; that with his resolve to go back he had wiped this thing from his brain. Now it was here—in the light, more vivid than ever. But it sat casually in the old attitude of their days of friendship, the back of the splint chair between its knees, the arms across the top rung. It smiled.

The candle fell from his hand, burned for a moment on the rag rug, went out. In the dark a voice spoke to him, the old rich voice with its little vein of cynicism,

"Sit down, Thad. I thought it was you."

There had never been voices before. There came to him the sense that this was no vision. It was reality or else—something in the brain that had harbored these apparitions had snapped. Dimly he recalled something he had heard from a nurse in the psycopathic ward over there:

"The failing brain never conceives that it is failing."

He sat down, waiting, listening.

There was a movement close to the hearth. The thing was coming toward him. It paused, lifted the candle, lighted it, set it on the table between them. It drew a chair close to him and sat down. Then in the flickering light it put out a hand and grasped his knee. It was a warm hand.

"Brace up," it said. "You'd think I was a ghost."

There is no authentic record of what happened then. Rumor has it that the man who had called himself Jerry Felsinger laid down his head on the table and cried as he would have scorned Surrey Thorn for crying. It is also said that he laughed and behaved like a man who has stumbled on a cellar full of moonshine.

But both these tales come from the moustachiod rider who had followed at a reasonable distance up the steep and, bringing the bag, had looked in the cabin door to discover if the visitor he had conducted here was in need of assistance. When the visitor had sent him on his way again, they two, visitor and host, talked rationally enough.

"The fact is," said the visitor, "I don't remember what I said that night and nobody else heard me."

"It was a warning," answered the man who had called

himself Jerry Felsinger. "A warning—about a woman, the kind of warning—"

"That men don't give each other," smiled the visitor. "Well, I wasn't in a state to remember that little nicety, or to know what I said."

"I thought of that afterwards."

"When they told you I was dead?"

"No. I remembered nothing then."

"You simply lit out?"

There was an instant's silence, then,

"Yes."

"You lit out to save your skin?"

A briefer silence, then,

"Yes."

"You lie," said the visitor, and as his host turned to him, his Glasgow-Ballyshannon badge flashing in the candle light, "You lie because I know. Are you aware that in the room where you staid those few minutes after you laid me out, there is a safe; that in that safe there is—or was—a necklace of black opals which the lady of whom we speak was keeping—ostensibly for me?"

The other did not answer.

"Are you aware that on the night I was killed, as the papers stated, that safe was blown open and Mrs. Raeburn announced to the world that the opals were gone? . . . You didn't know that, I see. Apparently you have neglected to subscribe for the Mendoza papers."

"Is it the general opinion," asked the other presently, "that I blew up this safe and absconded with the necklace?"

"The general opinion is that you left town next morning

—as soon as the physicians discovered that I was alive. Mendoza expects your return daily, for your father has never failed to state that you would be back on such and such a train, or for such and such an event. You have been transacting business for the bank in both Chicago and Minneapolis, did you know? By the way, Thad, if ever a man has stood by a chap and held out for him, that man's old MacDonald. Fred, too—I never handed Fred much, but he's lied like a prince in this deal. Do you still say you left at once?"

"I left at once."

"All right. Mendoza, as I was saying, suspects nothing. Mendoza thinks we quarreled over a poker deal and that it was like hitting like. I think Mrs. Raeburn assisted Mendoza in arriving at that solution—about the poker deal, I mean. When my little cousin-in-law wired me that the necklace had been found, I never would have thought of you, except—No matter. We'll come to that later.

"When I got here she described you—your hair, you know—and she told me how she almost gave you the cigar case I had sent her late husband—the case we picked out together in Paris that day. When she told me how you acted on that occasion and about Mendoza, and her maid's questions regarding you—little Sanda who worked in your house so long and whose brother you kept out of jail—"

"Sanda?"

"She worked for Mrs. Valentine. You didn't notice her, perhaps."

"So it was Mrs. Valentine."

"She nursed you a night when you were laid up. She

turned your pillow or something and found the necklace. Don't contradict that, you probably didn't see her. But before that, I knew you had the stones wherever you were."

He took a letter from his coat.

"Mrs. Raeburn's," he explained. "She asks that I share if with you, if ever I find you. Will you read it—or shall I?"

The other turned slightly away, shading his eyes with his hand. The visitor spread the letter out close to the candle, a pale yellow sheet surmounted by a silver crest, closely written in a sharp, light hand.

"Dear Maury," he began:

"My thanks for the silver bowl. It is very large and heavy with a narrow gold band about the rim and the Castanares crest on the side—a wonderful piece of répoussé. I describe it because I know you will want to know what it is like, ordering it here in the states as you did when my letter caught you in Honolulu.

"Just for this beautiful bowl I would give you back the necklace if I could. You should never have promised it to your Ellen, knowing me as you did. I did give you back the earrings and the broach. I never particularly cared for those. But to see her wearing the necklace—what did you think I was?

"I told you the earrings and the broach were not taken that night, that they were lying on my dresser—and they were. They might have been taken too if there had been time.

"Thad thought the necklace was mine—that my grandmother or something had left it to me. I never liked lying to Thad, little as you may believe it, and so I never made

the story very clear to him. It *was* mine, too. I never understood the ethics of taking things back. I hope you don't take back the bowl.

"When they took Thad upstairs that night I was simply wild with fright. I knew what you had said to him—the sort of thing you had said. You had been drinking before you came and you were angry over my not giving the opals back when you had promised them to Ellen. You were furious that she had to sit at my table and put on a good front for your sake—and the wine was not cooling you off. I knew that you would never get the jewels though I had consented to part with them. I had planned what was to happen to them.

"But my plans were diverted. When they took Thad upstairs I followed by a back way. The door of the stair I took opens upon a little den, and that was where they had taken him. I waited behind the portieres until he was alone.

"He had already heard that you were dead. He had no notion of flight. I discovered that at once. He knew that no jury—no western jury, at any rate—would convict him for defending a woman's name.

" 'Yes,' I said, 'they will clear you—but how about me?' And when he did not understand I added, 'Do you know what a trial is? Do you know their genius for ferreting out every corner of the past? Do you know that my name has been coupled with his, and that people will say he boasted—and that he had a right to boast? And your right to defend me . . . they will go into that. Even a love, such as ours has been, dragged into the light—'

"He was listening now.

" 'You resented his whispered words,' I said. 'What about those words ringing in a crowded court room?'

"He answered that in that event my husband would divorce me, that his own name would shelter me thereafter, that we would go far away . . .

"I told him he must go there now—alone; that I could not stand the disgrace, the disclosures. You know, Maury, I never could, or I would have let divorce do its worst long ago. Poor Raeburn! . . . I might have worked myself free and married you. I could have, you know. And I was once tempted to after Ellen Seftone looked me up and down. . . . That was when Thad first thought of flying. We had so few seconds to debate in. Even then there were footsteps in the hall outside. I opened the safe, snatched out the bag with the necklace, pushed it into his hand. I told him it was a keepsake—something to remember me by. He used to love them on me, said they were like me. I meant him to sell them, of course. I knew that he couldn't get money at that hour—at least not enough to take him very far. He went, not knowing what was in his hand.

"I stole with him down the back stair. My car was waiting for him there. His hat and coat were in it . . . I had seen to that.

"That was the last I saw of Thad. I nearly loved him.

"I am certain he thinks still that you are dead. He has gone too far for news to reach him—or he would have come back. I have put cards in the papers of every place I could think of, using the names we called each other by, but he has not answered. He took a train at a crossing that night and went in a westerly direction. Always I think of the West

when I think of Thad. I hoped that perhaps you would stumble upon him in China or Japan.

"He may have kept the necklace. I thought afterwards I should never have said to him that it was a keepsake, something to remember me by. But I was so wild that night, so hurried. Now of course I hope that he has kept it. If you ever find him, give him this letter. He will never tell you that I sent him on his flight—or why I sent him—unless you do.

"Do you think this means that I have turned angel of love, spreading my wings over even your pink and white Ellen? I fear me, no. I am merely going so far away that it won't matter. And I want you to know that Thad is really hiding in spite of what his father says. He will not come back until he knows the truth.

"As for the necklace—well, I owe you that for the silver bowl.

"As always,

"Arvia de Castanares."

The candle had gone out but the dawn was coming up in the gap between the hills. The man who had been Jerry Felsinger lowered his hand from before his eyes.

"De Castanares?" he said.

"A coffee king from Costa Rica. Her husband died a year ago in a German prison—but she didn't know."

The visitor smiled, folding the letter again.

"So you had started back, old bean, to give yourself up and afterwards 'shelter her with your name.' You'd have been a little late."

The other did not answer. After a moment he rose and going to the fireplace, began to pry loose one of the stones above the mantel. He came back with the chamois bag and laid it on the table. The visitor took it quickly up, spilled the black and green glitter into his hand. Twice he opened and closed his fingers upon the treasure. Then he looked up and smiled.

"They'll never suggest anybody but her, eh, Thad?" he said.

But Thad said nothing.

Moments later when the visitor had gone he still stood, his hand on the back of the empty chair, his eyes on the floor. Presently he raised his head and going to the door, opened it upon the new day. He felt strangely light and free, as when one who has been carrying a load and straining at a leash, feels his load fall and his leash give way. The sense of staggering began to go. He straightened his shoulders, lifted up his head. Then he flung down the step and along the path.

At the foot of the steep he opened the mail box and took out the letter he had written Kadis. Smiling a little grimly, he tore it across, thrust the fragments into his coat. Suddenly he looked up. From somewhere there had come to him the sound of singing.

And then he saw her coming toward him through the dawn.

The End